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# GRACE THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

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## Contents

The Structure and Sequence of Matthew 24:1-41: Interaction with Evangelical Treatments .....	3
DAVID L. TURNER	
A Classification of Conditional Sentences Based on Speech Act Theory .....	29
RICHARD A. YOUNG	
The Development of Grace Theological Seminary and the Division of the Brethren Church .....	51
RONALD T. CLUTTER	
<i>The Gospel According to Jesus: A Review Article</i> .....	67
HOMER A. KENT	
Book Reviews (see inside back cover) .....	79

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# THE STRUCTURE AND SEQUENCE OF MATTHEW 24:1-41: INTERACTION WITH EVANGELICAL TREATMENTS

DAVID L. TURNER

*Evangelical studies of Matthew 24 tend to emphasize either the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem (preterist view), the eschatological return of Christ (futurist view), or some combination of the two (preterist-futurist views). This study evaluates evangelical approaches, stressing recent treatments. It is concluded that a substantial portion of the chapter describes the present age. The A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem and the eschatological tribulation are theologically linked, with the former event serving as a token or earnest which anticipates the latter. "This generation" (24:34) describes Jesus' contemporaries who lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem. "All these things" (24:34) is limited by the contextual fig tree analogy to the events marking the course of the age, particularly the events of A.D. 70.*

\* \* \*

## INTRODUCTION

**“W**HEN will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” Matt 24:3 (*NIV*) thus states the disciples’ question occasioned by Jesus’ solemn words that their beloved temple would be torn down (24:2). His answer to their question has come to be known as the Olivet or Eschatological discourse. The interpretation of this discourse revolves around the two events spoken of by the disciples, the destruction of the temple (A.D. 70) and the coming of Christ at the end of the age. The degree of emphasis given to either of these events determines one’s interpretation of the discourse, since neither Matthew nor the other synoptists supply an explicit outline of Jesus’ answer with the two events neatly divided. Rather, both events are evidently so intricately interwoven that no consensus has been reached in the attempt to sort them out from each other.

This study of evangelical treatments of the structure and sequence of Matt 24:1-42 has isolated four basic views of the passage. The first

view, which will be called the futurist view, stresses the age-ending return of Christ and finds little if anything in these verses which addresses the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 or the current age.<sup>1</sup> Another view, which will be called the preterist view, is to a great extent the opposite of the first view. It sees relatively little of the passage (only 24:36–41) in terms of the end times. Rather the current age is in view, with the emphasis on the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Two other views amount to mediating positions between the first two. The first of these mediating positions, which will be called the traditional preterist-futurist view, sees a portion of the passage (usually 24:4–14) as a general description of the course of the present age, and another portion as a “double reference” prophecy of Jerusalem’s destruction and the end of the age.<sup>3</sup> A second mediating position, which will be called the revised preterist-futurist view, sees alternating reference in these verses to the course of the age, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the coming of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

All four of these approaches generally unite in their analysis of the main sections of the discourse. It is usually agreed that verses 4–14, 15–28, 29–31, and 32–41 comprise four major movements in Christ’s answer to the disciples. Verses 32–41 tend to form a transition

<sup>1</sup>Among evangelicals, this view is usually held by dispensationalists. See, e.g., Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., “Matthew,” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, NT ed., ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor, 1983) 76ff.; John F. Hart, “A Chronology of Matthew 24:1–44,” Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1986; Walter K. Price, *Jesus’ Prophetic Sermon* (Chicago: Moody, 1972); James F. Rand, “The Eschatology of the Olivet Discourse,” Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1954, and “A Survey of the Eschatology of the Olivet Discourse,” *BSac* 113 (1956) 162–73, 200–213; Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1980) 266ff.; and John F. Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come* (Chicago: Moody, 1974) 179ff. For a comprehensive survey of various views, see George C. Fuller, “The Structure of the Olivet Discourse,” Th.D. Dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1964, pp. 11–52.

<sup>2</sup>See, e.g., Harold Fowler, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 4 vols. (Joplin, MO: College, 1985) 4.389ff.; R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale NT Commentaries (Leicester/Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity/Eerdmans, 1985) 333ff.; J. Marcellus Kik, *Matthew Twenty-four: An Exposition* (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1948); and R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, Tyndale NT Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961) 223ff.

<sup>3</sup>E.g., Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 474ff.; William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973) 846ff.; Anthony T. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 114ff.; and George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 309ff.

<sup>4</sup>This seemingly novel approach is found in D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 495ff. and David Wenham, “‘This Generation Will Not Pass . . .’: A Study of Jesus’ Future Expectation in Mark 13” in *Christ the Lord*, ed. H. H. Rowdon (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1982) 127–50.

toward the emphasis upon alertness. The rest of the discourse, 24:42–25:46, seems to turn from the didactic to the parenetic in its repeated stress upon alertness, faithfulness, and service in view of the unknown hour of Christ's return. With this in mind, this study will present the salient features of each of the four major views on each of the four main sections of the passage. Each view will be evaluated in terms of strengths and weaknesses. The limited scope of the study precludes the inclusion of source critical issues relating to the synoptic problem (Mark 13; Luke 21). Also, there will be no treatment of the *vaticinia ex eventu* issue.<sup>5</sup> It is assumed that Matthew records a reliable account of the teachings of the historical Jesus.

It is concluded here that the traditional preterist-futurist view is preferable. Matt 24:4–14 describes the course of the present age, during which “enduring to the end” and “preaching the gospel of the kingdom” are the Church's duties. In 24:15–28 the “abomination of desolation” is understood to refer both to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem and to the ultimate abomination against God's people committed by the eschatological antichrist. Christ's return to earth is described in 24:29–31. Finally, 24:32–41 underlines the certainty of the prophecy's fulfillment with the assertion that Jesus' contemporaries will not die before they see his prophecy fulfilled.

#### MATTHEW 24:4–14

##### *Futurist View*

This view is generally held by dispensationalists, who understand this section as a reference to eschatological times just before<sup>6</sup> or during<sup>7</sup> the “great tribulation” period. Some go so far as to state that Matthew does not record Jesus' answer to the first part of the disciples' question about the destruction of the temple.<sup>8</sup> Since the pretribulation rapture of the Church has already occurred by the time of the temple's destruction, the passage is viewed as having only a secondary application to the Church. Instead, the disciples to whom Jesus is

<sup>5</sup>The question of “prophecy after the event” is raised by some who doubt that Matthew faithfully reports Jesus' actual teaching here. Instead it is posited that the “prophecy” originated after the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem. For evaluative discussions of this question and the related “little apocalypse” theory see G. R. Beasley-Murray, *A Commentary on Mark 13* (London: Macmillan, 1957) and *Jesus and the Future* (London: Macmillan, 1954); Bo Reicke, “Synoptic Prophecies on the Destruction of Jerusalem” in *Studies in the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. D. W. Aune, NovTSupp 33 (Leiden: Brill, 1972) 121–34; and J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) 13–30.

<sup>6</sup>Toussaint, *Matthew*, 271.

<sup>7</sup>Barbieri, “Matthew,” 76.

<sup>8</sup>Barbieri, “Matthew,” 76; Rand, “Survey,” 166; and Walvoord, *Matthew*, 182.

speaking represent Jewish believers during the eschatological tribulation. In fairness it should be noted that some have taken a portion<sup>9</sup> or all<sup>10</sup> of this section in reference to the Church age. However, these expositors tend to be exceptions to the trend and even they are not consistent in their approach.

Such an understanding of 24:4-14 is doubtful on several grounds. First, the disciples will soon become the nucleus of the Church, so it is difficult to understand why Jesus would speak to them as representatives of an eschatological Jewish remnant. Matthew cannot be consistently understood as a gospel for such a remnant. It is the only gospel to use the word ἐκκλησία (16:18; 18:17). Its topical arrangement of Jesus' teachings into discourse blocks (chapters 5-7; 10; 13; 18; 23-25) is especially appropriate for the use of the Church. Most dispensationalists grant that at least some of these discourses are directly intended for the Church. Also, most would agree that the stirring mandate for discipleship with which Matthew concludes is incumbent upon the Church today. Thus this interpretation does not fit Matthew's characteristic emphasis.<sup>11</sup>

Neither does this view fit the immediate occasion of the discourse, the disciples' question of 24:3. Their immediate concern was the destruction of the beautiful temple precinct which they viewed with great pride (24:1; cf. Mark 13:1; Luke 21:5). To assume that Matthew passes over this aspect of their question is unwarranted. Indeed, this was the main burden of their question. They seem to view the end of the age and the coming of Christ<sup>12</sup> as the outcome of the temple's destruction. Therefore it is very doubtful that Matthew expected his readers to consult Mark or Luke in order to find an answer to the first part of their question.<sup>13</sup>

This view also has problems with the content of 24:4-14, which belabors a warning against undue eschatological speculation. False

<sup>9</sup>H. A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Loizeaux, 1948) 313-18; Price, *Jesus' Prophetic Sermon*, 47-60; and Rand, "Survey," 164. Commonly 24:4-8 is viewed as describing the present age, but even these verses describe Israel's experience, not the Church's.

<sup>10</sup>E. Schuyler English, ed., *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford, 1967) 1033. Here verses 4-14 are viewed as having a double interpretation describing the general course of the age with intensified unrest during the tribulation. For a similar view see Walvoord, *Matthew*, 183.

<sup>11</sup>Basic to this discussion is the relationship between the Kingdom, the Church and the millennium. The view taken here is that the Kingdom is a much broader entity than the millennium. The Church is the agency of the Kingdom during this age. Thus there is no antithesis between the Kingdom and the Church.

<sup>12</sup>Matthew brackets the nouns σημεῖον and συντελείας with one article, indicating that they are two aspects of a unified whole. See note 20 for support.

<sup>13</sup>As in Walvoord, *Matthew*, 182.



messiahs and wars should not alarm the disciples. These things are included in God's program but are not harbingers of the end (οὐπω ἔστιν τὸ τέλος, 24:6). Wars, famines, and earthquakes seem to be nearly routine events which signal but the beginning of Messianic woes (ἀρχὴ ὠδίνων, 24:8). Treachery, persecution, and apostasy will mark the age, but the disciples must persevere in obedience (24:13) and gospel proclamation to all nations (24:14). Only then will the end come. It is evident that all the events spoken of in this section have been frequently observed throughout the history of the Church. To suggest that 24:13 describes physical deliverance at the end of the tribulation<sup>14</sup> does not fit either the immediate context or Matthew's repeated stress upon perseverance as a mark of genuine discipleship. The attempt to distinguish an eschatological "gospel of the kingdom" (24:14) from the Church's message today<sup>15</sup> is disturbing in view of the finality of our Lord's redemptive work.

The manner in which dispensationalism has traditionally handled this section is thus weak on several fronts. However, this approach to Matthew 24 is not mandatory for dispensationalism. Contemporary dispensationalists should rethink this area of NT exegesis.

### *Preterist View*

Those who stress the A.D. 70 destruction of the temple tend to view 24:4-14 as a warning against premature eschatological speculation.<sup>16</sup> In this view there is nothing here about the eschatological tribulation period. Just the opposite emphasis is found. Jesus is attempting to discourage his disciples from assuming that the type of events mentioned here presage the end. Thus it is evident that advocates of this view would echo the concerns expressed above about the standard dispensational view of the passage. According to France, the destruction of the temple signals the end of any special status for Israel but does not indicate the end of all things.<sup>17</sup> France seems to indicate that the events of 24:4-14 refer to Church history in general, but Fowler takes this section as describing only the days up to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, he believes that the worldwide preaching of 24:14 had occurred before the temple was destroyed.

<sup>14</sup>Walvoord, *Matthew*, 184.

<sup>15</sup>Barbieri, "Matthew," 77. Paul Lee Tan is one futurist who argues for an essential identity of the gospel of the kingdom with the Church's present message. See Tan's *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1974) 261, n. 2.

<sup>16</sup>France, *Matthew*, 337.

<sup>17</sup>France, *Matthew*, 339.

<sup>18</sup>Fowler, *Matthew*, 4.427-28.

The strength of this view is clear—Jesus does emphasize that these events are not signs of the end. Also, the Church's responsibility to persevere and to evangelize is stressed. However, two problems can be mentioned. First, France emphasizes that Jesus to some extent attempted to correct the disciples' close connection between the fall of Jerusalem and the end of all things.<sup>19</sup> This may be true to a limited degree. However, France uses a weak syntactical argument to buttress his understanding. Alluding to the second part of the disciples' question of 24:3 (καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον τῆς σῆς παρουσίας καὶ συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος), he comments that the disciples equated the coming of Christ and the end of the age as the same event. While no one would argue that these two events were widely separated in the disciples' minds, France overstates the syntactical evidence for his view. The fact that one article governs both nouns indicates a close connection or unity between them, but does not necessarily mean that both words describe the same event.<sup>20</sup> In itself this is a small thing, but France uses it to argue that the disciples were wrong in viewing the A.D. 70 fall of the temple as the beginning of the end. So this syntactically weak argument is also suspect from the standpoint of a widely recognized phenomenon of biblical prophecy, the "foreshortening" of perspective in which "near" and "far" events are viewed together. This point will be developed later in this study.

Another difficulty concerns Fowler's insistence that 24:14 was fulfilled by A.D. 70.<sup>21</sup> To support this contention he adduces Acts 2:5; Rom 1:8; 10:18; and Col 1:6, 23. However, it is doubtful whether these texts are analogous to Matt 24:14, which doubly stresses the universality of gospel preaching—ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ . . . πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν. Acts 2:5 merely mentions that Jews and proselytes from all nations were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Rom 1:8 concerns the reputation of the Roman church which had evidently spread (among other Christians?) throughout the whole world (κόσμος). Even Rom 10:18 (Isa 65:2) and Col 1:23, admittedly strong texts for Fowler's view, should be read in view of Rom 15:19; 16:23ff. which indicate that Paul still wished to take the gospel to previously unreached regions (Spain). Such texts do not approximate the breadth

<sup>19</sup>France, *Matthew*, 337.

<sup>20</sup>See the discussion of this construction, sometimes called the "Granville Sharp construction/rule" in H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek NT* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955) 147; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek NT in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934) 785–89; Herbert W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1956) 291; Nigel Turner, *Syntax*, vol. 3 of *A Grammar of NT Greek* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1963) 181–82; and Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, trans. J. Smith (Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963) 59–60.

<sup>21</sup>Fowler, *Matthew*, 4.433–34.

of Matt 24:14. Another problem with this approach is hinted at by France, who indicates that setting a definite time or situation for the fulfillment of 24:14 would also allow the calculation of a date for the final consummation at Christ's return (*contra* 24:36).<sup>22</sup>

### *Traditional Preterist-Futurist View*

This approach sees a double reference beginning at 24:15, but understands 24:4-14 as a general description of the Church's life in the world. It is probably correct to say that this general approach is held by a majority of conservative sources. Also, sources holding this view represent widely diverging eschatological positions. Gundry, for one, takes this section's events as "noneschatological characteristics of the Church age."<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Hendriksen notes that 24:4-14 serves to correct the mistaken notion that such events as are detailed here indicate the nearness of the end.<sup>24</sup> However, he does believe that worldwide gospel proclamation (24:14) is a "preliminary sign" of Christ's return.

Since this approach to 24:4-14 is similar to that of the previous view and antithetical to the common dispensational view, its merits and demerits have already been cited. Little needs to be added here. Hendriksen may have a point that the worldwide preaching of the gospel is the most definite "sign" mentioned in this section,<sup>25</sup> but even this is sufficiently vague so as to discourage undue speculation. How can anyone know with precision when this point of worldwide evangelism has been reached? Additionally, the words "and then" (καὶ τότε) do not necessarily mean that the end will come "immediately after" (cf. 24:29) worldwide evangelism.

### *Revised Preterist-Futurist View*

This view entails an approach to 24:4-14 which does not differ appreciably from the previous view. This section of Jesus' discourse is taken to describe the current age of the Church. Carson takes the "birth pains" of 24:8 as the trials which "stretch over the period between the two advents" of Christ. Such trials must occur due to the fact that the age of the Kingdom's inauguration involves conflict and tension. Only with the consummation of the Kingdom at the second advent will trials be removed and messianic glories attained.<sup>26</sup> In the

<sup>22</sup>France, *Matthew*, 339.

<sup>23</sup>Gundry, *Matthew*, 475.

<sup>24</sup>Hendriksen, *Matthew*, 852.

<sup>25</sup>Hendriksen, *Matthew*, 856.

<sup>26</sup>Carson, "Matthew," 498.

meantime, the Church should realistically expect to experience these trials as it carries out its mission to the world.

There is no need to belabor the evaluation of this view since it is similar to the last view in its approach to 24:4–14. The crucial issues have already been noted.

### *Conclusion*

The evaluation of the four approaches to Matt 24:4–14 reveals two basic approaches. The futurist view takes at least 24:9–14 as a description of the eschatological tribulation period. The other three views occupy common ground in understanding this section as a description of the Church's experience during the current age. It must be concluded that the futurist view, held by traditional dispensationalists, is unconvincing. It does not satisfactorily handle the contextual emphasis on the fall of Jerusalem and the need for perseverance in evangelism. On the other hand, the rather extreme version of the A.D. 70 view held by Fowler is also unsatisfactory in its limitation of these events to the period before the destruction of Jerusalem. It rather appears that the experiences mentioned by Jesus span the past, present, and future history of the Church.

#### MATTHEW 24:15–28

### *Futurist View*

The futurist view of 24:15–28, commonly held by dispensationalists, is tied directly to a futurist view of the abomination of desolation in Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. These texts are taken to be predictive of the eschatological enemy of God's people, the antichrist.<sup>27</sup> 2 Thess 2:3–4 and Rev 13:11–18 are adduced as parallels and interpreted in a strictly futuristic manner. Dan 9:27 in particular looms large as a precise indicator of the time of the fulfillment of Matt 24:15, the middle of the seven year eschatological tribulation period. The unequalled distress of the period (24:21) is emphasized. Thus Matt 24:15–28 is locked tightly into the second half of Daniel's seventieth week, with little or no reference to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.

While it may be granted that the ultimate outcome of this prophecy involves the eschatological tribulation and antichrist, it is doubtful that this is the sole concern of the prophecy. The futurist view may be challenged on two fronts. First, as was alleged in the evaluation of the futurist view of 24:4–14, the immediate concern of the disciples regarding the destruction of the temple is totally neglected in this approach. The disciples become representatives of an eschatological

<sup>27</sup>Toussaint, *Matthew*, 273–74.

Jewish remnant, not the Church. All of this is wrapped up in the mistaken notion that Matthew's presentation of Jesus as King involves a Jewish, not a Church focus.

A second problem with this approach is its simplistic approach to Daniel's prophecy of the abomination of desolation. While it may be granted that Dan 9:27 and 12:11 refer to the ultimate eschatological tribulation, such is not the case for 11:31, which refers to Antiochus Epiphanes, as is noted even by recent dispensational commentaries on Daniel.<sup>28</sup> Who is to say that Jesus' reference to Daniel is strictly eschatological? Might he be alluding also to Antiochus Epiphanes' intertestamental desolation of the temple as an example of the coming Roman destruction and of the ultimate eschatological destruction? An affirmative answer is probable, given other implications in Daniel.

Daniel begins with a providentially ordained "desolation" of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar (1:1-2). Later, Belshazzar arrogantly furthers the sacrilege (5:2-4, 22-23) and forfeits his kingdom. Daniel demonstrates remarkable faith under trial in praying toward a "desolate" Jerusalem (6:10; cf. 1 Kgs 8:46-51; 2 Chron 8:36-39). Daniel's vision of the four kingdoms describes the fourth kingdom (generally taken by conservatives to be Rome) in a manner which implies the desolation of Jerusalem (7:8, 11, 19-21, 25). The following vision of the ram and the goat includes an explicit description of the desolation of temple worship (8:11-14, 23-25). Of course, it is a matter of considerable debate whether the little horns of Daniel 7 and 8 represent the same kingdom. Since the goat of Daniel 8 is clearly Greece (8:21), it is probable that the "desolation" prophecies of Daniel 7 and 8 describe both the third and fourth kingdoms, Greece and Rome. In the next chapter Jerusalem's "desolation" as fulfillment of covenant curse and prophetic oracle plays a prominent role in Daniel's moving confession and petition for restoration (9:7, 12, 16, 19-20). As is well known, the prophecy of the 70 weeks features the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its subsequent destruction (9:24-27), and even dispensational commentators agree that the A.D. 70 destruction is in view in 9:26.<sup>29</sup>

The upshot of all this is that Jesus' reference to the abomination of desolation in Daniel calls up a complex typology of prophecy and fulfillment stretching all the way from Nebuchadnezzar to the eschatological antichrist. There is no warrant for supposing that the abomination of desolation is a narrow prediction which is fulfilled solely by the eschatological antichrist. There is good reason to believe that the

<sup>28</sup> John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971) 268; John C. Whitcomb, *Daniel* (Chicago: Moody, 1985) 150-52; and Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973) 301-2.

<sup>29</sup> Walvoord, *Daniel*, 230-31; Whitcomb, *Daniel*, 133; and Wood, *Daniel*, 256.

various historical desolations of Jerusalem and the temple, including those of Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus Epiphanes, the Roman conquest (63 B.C.), Gaius Caligula (which was planned but not accomplished in A.D. 40–41), the zealots (A.D. 68), the Romans in A.D. 70 and 135, all provide anticipatory fulfillments which lead up to the ultimate desolation of the eschatological antichrist. The futurist approach correctly stresses the consummation of the prophecy but does not recognize the anticipatory background. All this argues for some sort of “double reference,” “near-far” approach<sup>30</sup> if the prophecy is to be handled holistically.

### *Preterist View*

In contrast to the view which sees Matt 24:15–28 as exclusively future, this approach interprets it as exclusively past. Just as many dispensationalists take the passage as an answer to only the second part of the disciples’ question, so advocates of this view take it as an answer only to the first part. It is noticed that generalities give way to specifics in this section. References to Judean geography (24:16, 26) are stressed as limiting the prophecy to A.D. 70.<sup>31</sup> The cryptic words “Let the reader understand” (24:15) are viewed as encouraging Matthew’s readers to apply the prophecy to their own situation.<sup>32</sup> The false prophets and messiahs mentioned here (24:23–26) are viewed as those who led Israel into the Jewish War. In short, this approach takes the passage at face value when it describes the abomination as something which the disciples themselves will experience.

No doubt there is much which is attractive in this position. The observation that 24:15–28 contains more precise information than 24:4–14 is correct. The stress upon the disciples’ own lifetime in the first century does justice to the natural meaning of the text. However, it is doubtful if this section can be totally “deeschatologized.” The relationship between “then the end shall come” in 24:14 and “so when you see . . . the abomination . . .” in 24:15 seems to indicate the end of the age and Christ’s coming in the second part of the disciples’ original question. The stress on the unparalleled nature of this judgment (24:21–22) does not seem to be exhausted by the A.D. 70 destruction, as severe as it was. In fact, such unparalleled judgment is placed in Dan 12:1–2 in the context of the final resurrection. As noted in the previous section, Daniel’s abomination of desolation leads up to the ultimate eschatological antichrist, the final resurrection, and the reign of the saints with the Son of Man. Therefore the

<sup>30</sup>As in Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 310ff.

<sup>31</sup>France, *Matthew*, 340.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.



preterist view is inadequate as an explanation of all the details of the passage. It is argued next that the traditional preterist-futurist view more adequately handles all these details.

### *Traditional Preterist-Futurist View*

Advocates of this approach argue that a common feature of biblical prediction is the complexity of its fulfillment. Several terms, such as "prophetic foreshortening,"<sup>33</sup> "prophetic outlook/perspective,"<sup>34</sup> "double fulfillment,"<sup>35</sup> "comprehensive character,"<sup>36</sup> and "generic fulfillment"<sup>37</sup> have been coined to describe this difficult phenomenon. Applied to this passage, the idea is that the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem betokens and anticipates the ultimate eschatological time of the end. The prophet necessarily uses the particularistic language of his own time to describe both the anticipatory and consummatory aspects of his prediction.<sup>38</sup> The prophet does not perceive the historic gap between the two aspects of his prophecy. Indeed, to speak of two aspects is possible only from the perspective of hindsight, a luxury available only to the modern scholar. Rather the prophet, in this case Jesus, sees the events as a unity. In this case that unity centers in the abomination of desolation, which has already been demonstrated to involve a complex series of events in the book of Daniel. Jesus' prophecy builds on this Danielic background.

Support for this understanding of 24:15-28 can be drawn generally from 1 Pet 1:10-12, where prophetic perspective is described as involving the prophets' desire to grasp more fully the relationship between the sufferings and glory of the Messiah. In some fashion they realized that their prophecies would find full significance in the future

<sup>33</sup>Hendriksen, *Matthew*, 846.

<sup>34</sup>Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 315. See also Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Chicago: Moody, 1959) 136-39. McClain's warning that a "hard and fast chronological scheme" should not be read into the Olivet Discourse (p. 365) has not been heeded by many dispensationalists.

<sup>35</sup>Gundry, *Matthew*, 491.

<sup>36</sup>H. N. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, trans. H. deJongste, ed. R. O. Zorn (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1962) 497.

<sup>37</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Promise of the Arrival of Elijah in Malachi and in the Gospels," *GTJ* 3 (1982) 221-33, following W. J. Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963 reprint), especially pp. 127-32. Elsewhere Kaiser takes pains to distinguish between "double reference" and "dual sense." He is also correct that the "double reference" concept tends to mislead if it is taken to imply that only two foci are involved in the fulfillment of the prophecy. See his "Legitimate Hermeneutics" in *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 130-32. The essay originally appeared in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 117-47.

<sup>38</sup>Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, 496-97, 525.

Messianic age (1:12). Since the first coming of Christ, additional revelation and hindsight enable interpreters to understand that this Messianic age involves two comings of Christ. As Briggs pointed out long ago,<sup>39</sup> just as the first coming of Christ provided the key to our present partial understanding of OT prophecy, so also the second coming of Christ will provide the ultimate solution to the problem of the chronological unfolding of events yet future today. Thus it is not surprising that there is difficulty in handling the precise chronology of Matt 24:15–28. Christian interpreters today may grasp the overall chronological vista of prophecy better than the OT prophets themselves did. However, those living “between the times” will need to exercise humility and patience as they wait for the ultimate clarification. In the meantime, it is appropriate to recognize the theological unity of predicted events both past and present. This is what the preterist-futurist view of Matt 24:15–28 attempts to do.

Beyond this general basis, numerous specific examples of this type of prophetic fulfillment can be adduced. In the passage at hand, “false Christs” and “false prophets” (ψευδόχριστοι καὶ ψευδοπροφῆται, 24:24; cf. 24:5) are prominent. In view of other NT passages, such language should be understood from an anticipation/consummation perspective (2 Thess 2:7–8; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:1–3; 2 John 7; Rev 2:20; 13; 17; 19:20). Further afield, in the OT prophecy of the Day of the Lord (יִּהְיֶה יוֹם הַהוּא), current events which signal eschatological catastrophe are difficult to separate from that catastrophe.<sup>40</sup> Malachi’s prophecy of the return of Elijah (Mal 4:5–6) is fulfilled to a degree in John the Baptist (Luke 1:16–17; Matt 11:14; 17:12–13), but many would argue that the prophecy is not yet consummated (John 1:21; Matt 17:10–11; Rev 11:3ff.).<sup>41</sup> Jesus’ reference to Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–21; Isa 61:1–2) also implies the fulfillment of only part of Isaiah’s prophecy at the first coming, leaving the rest for the end times. Peter’s understanding of OT prophecy in Acts 2–3 also seems to demand an anticipatory fulfillment in the Church which arguably leads up to the eschatological turning of Israel to its Messiah.<sup>42</sup> James’ understanding of Amos

<sup>39</sup>Charles A. Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy* (New York: Scribner’s, 1886) 55.

<sup>40</sup>E.g., the locust plague of Joel 1 is the basis for the prophecy of the day of the Lord in chapter 2. A perusal of commentaries on Joel will indicate that it is not easy to distinguish where the description of the locust plague ends and where the prophecy of the day of the Lord begins.

<sup>41</sup>See Kaiser, “The Promise,” 221–33 for a discussion of the various views.

<sup>42</sup>This is argued by Darrell Bock, “The Reign of the Lord Christ,” paper presented to the dispensationalism study group prior to the national ETS meeting in December 1987. Copies of this paper and responses to it are available from Prof. Gerry Breshears at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, OR.



(Acts 15:13-18; Amos 9:11-12) should probably be understood in this manner, along with NT texts which find fulfillment of the OT New Covenant in the Church. In terms of NT theology, it would seem that "inaugurated" eschatology, as an alternative to the tunnel vision and selective use of data which characterize the "consistent" and "realized" schools, is based upon this understanding of the theological continuity of the two comings of Christ. Finally, many specific details of salvation history may be understood to flow from the "mother promise" or *protevangelium* of Gen 3:15. While the immediate context of this passage as judgment and its stress upon struggle have often been neglected or understated in Messianic exegesis, there can be little doubt that it should be understood as a seminal though cryptic announcement of a struggle which culminates in the ultimate victory of the Messiah over Satan (Matt 12:28-29; John 12:31-32; Gal 3:19; 4:4; Rom 16:20; Heb 2:14-15; Rev 12:9; 20:2, 10). In short, those who take Matt 24:15-28 as a double reference prophecy can appeal to a wide range of passages which have been understood similarly by a wide range of scholars.

Though he grants that this approach is "possible," Carson finds two faults with it. First, it has difficulties with such time references as "immediately after . . . those days" (εὐθέως δὲ μετὰ . . . ; 24:29) and "this generation" (ἡ γενεά αὕτη; 24:34), and second, it has been held by some who have attributed error to Jesus in his perspective of the timing of the parousia.<sup>43</sup> On further examination, these two problems are both due to the chronological complexity of the events which fulfill the prophecy. Those who demand chronological precision have occasionally concluded that Jesus' timing was in error. However, this is unwarranted due to the theological continuity between anticipatory and consummatory aspects of the prophecy. Those who seek chronological precision also confuse the nature of biblical prophecy with modern historiography, implying modern notions of precision that would have been foreign to the times of the prophet and the genre of his revelation.

### *Revised Preterist-Futurist View*

The revised preterist-futurist view comes into its own in its unique handling of this section of Matthew 24. Verses 15-21 are taken to refer strictly to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, but verses 22-28 are viewed as a return to the subject of verses 4-14, the age of the Church as a time of general distress for believers.<sup>44</sup> Thus 24:15-28 alternately describes in 15-21 a special time of tribulation during the

<sup>43</sup>Carson, "Matthew," 492.

<sup>44</sup>Carson, "Matthew," 502.

course of the Church's history and in 22–28 the general course of the age. Verses 15–21 are limited to A.D. 70 due to the geographical and cultural details which fit first century Judea.<sup>45</sup> Verses 22–28 are expanded to the general course of the age due to terminology (“the elect,” “all flesh”), themes, and synoptic considerations which tie these verses back to verses 4–14.<sup>46</sup> If one is impressed with the difficulties of the views already cited, this view becomes an attractive alternative, though it is not without problems of its own.

A major difficulty is the sharp break posited between verses 21 and 22. Verse 22 begins with καὶ, giving the impression of continuity with what precedes. The natural and near antecedent to αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκείναι is θλίψις μεγάλη in verse 21, and this in turn goes back to ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις in verse 19. To break the smooth flow of the paragraph which comprises verses 15–28 and to seek a remote antecedent involving an entirely different referent seems to be unjustified if not unjustifiable. It is doubtful whether Jesus' original listeners or Matthew's later audience would have been able to make such a shift in perspective given such little warning. To be sure, 15–21 does use geographically and culturally limited terms. But how else could Jesus speak meaningfully to his audience? It is commonly recognized that prophecy involves such limited terms in description of the distant future.<sup>47</sup> If this is so, it is doubtful if verse 21's description of unparalleled tribulation can legitimately be limited to the severe though localized destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, especially when this language in Dan 12:1–2 occurs in the context of the final resurrection and judgment. It may be granted that 22–28 uses broader terms and themes which cohere with 4–14, but these factors may be satisfactorily explained from the double reference view without the hypothesis of a sharp change of subject matter. Finally, there is the admitted novelty of the view.<sup>48</sup> While novelty does not necessarily invalidate an interpretation, it does place upon it the burden of proof. This is Carson's cogent argument against the common dispensational view, yet it tells just as well against his own view.

### *Conclusion*

The discussion of interpretations of Matt 24:15–28 reveals that the determining factor is the abomination of desolation in 24:15. Interpreters relate the term to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem and to the eschatological antichrist. It is concluded here that those views which disjunctively interpret the section in terms of either A.D.

<sup>45</sup>Carson, “Matthew,” 499.

<sup>46</sup>Carson, “Matthew,” 502.

<sup>47</sup>Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, 45, 55–56.

<sup>48</sup>Carson, “Matthew,” 495.

70 or an eschatological situation are inadequate. Rather both events are in view here. The standard preterist-futurist view, termed "double reference," is preferable to the revised approach which sees alternating reference between the specific event of A.D. 70 and the general course of the age.

#### MATTHEW 24:29-31

##### *Futurist View*

In keeping with their general approach, dispensational advocates of this view understand this section to be a description of Christ's second coming to the earth. The "tribulation of those days" (24:29) is viewed strictly as the eschatological seventieth week of Daniel. Thus the posttribulational coming of Christ to judge the nations (cf. 25:31-46), not the pretribulational rapture of the Church, is in view in 24:29-31. Much is made of the differences between these two phases of Christ's return, sometimes in terms of a strong distinction between Israel and the Church.<sup>49</sup>

While there are general doubts about dispensationalism's strict futurism and its rigid Israel/Church distinction, most interpreters would agree with dispensationalists that Christ's second coming to earth is described here. However, it is doubtful that the tribulation language in the discourse is strictly eschatological. For Matthew, persecution in this life is to be expected by believers (2:13; 5:10-12, 39-48; 10:16-33; 12:14; 13:21; 16:18, 21; 17:12; 20:18-19; 21:33-41; 22:6; 23:29-37; 26:4, 45; 27:12, 39-44). Thus *θλίψις* (24:9), *θλίψις μεγάλη* (24:21), and *τὴν θλίψιν τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐκείνων* (24:29) should not be assumed to refer only to the time of eschatological trouble. Rather the tribulation which is the general experience of believers in this age will be intensified to an unparalleled extent in eschatological days. It may be granted that the eschatological intensification is stressed in 24:21, 29, but it is against the background of the general tribulation, including that pertaining to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, which anticipates it.

Since the real issue in the interpretation of 24:29-31 is raised by the advocates of the preterist view, the discussion now turns to that position.

##### *Preterist View*

In contrast to the strict futurism of the preceding view, proponents of this view continue to stress the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem as the event described in 24:29-31. France in advocating this

<sup>49</sup>Toussaint, *Matthew*, 277; Walvoord, *Matthew*, 190.

view grants that this language "to modern ears sounds like a description of the 'parousia and the close of the age' (i.e., the second part of the question in v. 3)." <sup>50</sup> However, there are several factors which lead France and others away from this widespread approach. It is first recognized that the genre of the OT language alluded to here is apocalyptic. Thus one should not press the details in a woodenly literal fashion. There are also contextual factors which influence the view, chiefly the "immediately after" phrase which introduces 24:29. Obviously the second coming of Christ did not occur immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem, but there is a sense in which the heavenly vindication of Jesus did. Also it is noted that 24:30 does not use *παρουσία* but instead *ἐρχόμενον* to describe Christ's "coming," and that there is no mention of the "earth" as Christ's destination. Therefore these verses describe the heavenly glory of the ascended Messiah (29–30), along with his worldwide program for evangelization (31). The passage should be understood "as a highly symbolic description of the theological significance of the coming destruction of the temple and its consequences." <sup>51</sup>

Since the other three views discussed in this study tend to agree that 24:29–31 describes the second coming of Christ to the earth, it is necessary to analyze this disparate approach carefully. Some of its arguments are plausible and deserve attention. Perhaps the foundation of the view is its understanding that Daniel 7, alluded to in 24:30, describes a scene of heavenly vindication with no connection to the return of Christ to the earth. However, the vision of Daniel 7 shows how the Kingdom of the Son of Man forever supplants the reign of earthly kings (7:17). The Son of Man is vindicated in order to exercise universal and everlasting rule over all the human dominions under heaven (7:14, 27). Thus it is difficult to see Christ's ascension to heavenly glory as the ultimate fulfillment of Daniel 7. Though it is true that the earth is not mentioned explicitly as Christ's destination in either Daniel 7 or Matt 24:29–31, it is clear in both passages that the sphere of his rule is the earth. For that matter, the earth is not even mentioned in 24:37, 39, 42, 44! Thus this line of argumentation is weak in that it depends upon silence. Though the apocalyptic genre of Daniel 7 and the other OT passages alluded to must be noted, one need not handle these texts in a literalistic fashion to demonstrate that the earth is the sphere of the Messiah's reign.

The preterist view is also suspect in its handling of Matthew's context and theology. Since Jesus has just mentioned the nature of his parousia in 24:27, it is natural to assume that the events of 24:29–31 continue to describe the parousia. If "the tribulation of those days"

<sup>50</sup>France, *Matthew*, 343.

<sup>51</sup>France, *Matthew*, 345–46.

in 24:29 cannot be limited to the A.D. 70 events, as argued earlier, then there is no reason to understand 24:30 merely as a heavenly coming. Besides, Christ's heavenly session began 35-40 years before the destruction of the temple. The Gentile mission also began long before the destruction of the temple, so it is difficult to substantiate the theological connection asserted in this view. Further, to view Christ's coming with glory and angels as a reference to the Church's mission would be foreign to Matthew's use of these ideas elsewhere in his gospel. Three other passages (16:27, 19:28, and 25:31) connect a glorious coming with angels to the return of Christ to judge and rule the earth. The fact that these passages all use forms of ἔρχομαι, not παρουσία, to describe this coming carries no weight at all, since the latter term occurs only in Matt 24:3, 27. On the other hand, forms of ἔρχομαι regularly describe both the first and second coming of Christ to the earth (11:3; 21:9, 40; 22:11; 23:39; 24:44, 46, 50; 25:19; 26:64). Therefore this approach to 24:29-31 cannot be sustained.

### *Traditional Preterist-Futurist View*

There is nothing particularly unique about this position's handling of this section. In agreement with all the positions except the preterist view just discussed, this approach views 24:29-31 as a prediction of Christ's glorious return to the earth for judgment. Premillennialists holding the view will speak of the beginning of the millennial reign at this juncture. Others will speak of the general resurrection and the last judgment.

The evaluation of this approach will be determined by one's appraisal of the argumentation of the last section on the preterist view. Those who hold that position make much of the heavenly vindication of the Son of Man in Daniel 7. It would appear, however, that the traditional preterist-futurist view is well able to handle Daniel 7 as implying both the heavenly inauguration and earthly consummation of God's Kingdom. The inauguration stage began at the ascension, as other texts in Matthew may imply (10:23, 16:18-19, 28; cf. Acts 2:29-36; 1 Cor 15:20-28; Rev 5:9-10). The consummation stage will begin at the second coming. In the meantime, the ascended, glorified, authoritative Messiah sends his Church forth with his commission (28:18-20). This truth is sometimes neglected in strict futuristic approaches. It appears that only an inaugurated eschatology can handle the legitimate insights of both the preterists and the futurists, and that the preterist-futurist or double reference view best fits this sort of eschatology.

The preterist-futurist view is also able to handle the problem occasioned by the "immediately after" of 24:29. In deference to an orthodox Christology, traditional dispensationalism handles 24:15-28

as strictly futuristic. Thus the return of Christ to earth immediately follows the eschatological tribulation. The same doctrinal compunc-tions underlie the preterist view, which handles 24:29–31 in a fashion which matches its handling of 24:15–28: Christ’s heavenly vindication immediately follows the destruction of Jerusalem. In contrast to both of these approaches, the preterist-futurist view holds that the anticipatory A.D. 70 destruction was not clearly distinguished from the consummating eschatological judgment in the prophetic perspective. Thus the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, the eschatological judgment of the world, and the return of Christ, are seen as one great unified whole. Ridderbos’ comments to this effect are provocative:

Instead of applying such a historicizing exegesis, we must try to gain an insight into the character of the prophetic way of foretelling the future. And it should not be forgotten that this is something different than a diary of future events. Prophecies are not based on a partial transference of the divine omniscience to man. Jesus explicitly states that even the Son does not share in the divine omniscience with respect to the time of the end. The function of prophecy is consequently not that of a detailed projection of the future, but is the urgent insistence on the certainty of the things to come. This explains why, at the end of the vista, the perspective is lacking. The prophet sees all kinds of events that will come and he sees in all of them the coming of God. But he cannot fix a date for the events, he cannot distinguish all the phases in God’s coming. To him it is one great reality.<sup>52</sup>

### *Revised Preterist-Futurist View*

This approach to 24:29–31 does not differ appreciably from any of the main views except the preterist view. These verses are taken to describe the return of Christ to the earth. The problem of “immediately after” in 24:29 is relieved since this approach takes 24:22–28 as a description of general events throughout the age of the Church. Thus “the tribulation of those days” refers all the way back to the generic tribulation of 24:9, not to the “great tribulation” of 24:21. In other words, the entire interadvent period is in view,<sup>53</sup> and the second coming immediately follows this indeterminate period of time.

This approach handles 24:29–31 more successfully than does the preterist view. However, its manner of alleviating the problem of “immediately after” in 24:29 depends upon its identification of “the tribulation of those days” as the entire interadvent period. And this identification depends upon the alternating reference given to 24:15–28, with 15–21 describing the A.D. 70 destruction and 22–28 describing

<sup>52</sup>Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, 524–25.

<sup>53</sup>Carson, “Matthew,” 504–5.



the Church age. The difficulties of splitting the reference of 15-28 at verse 22 have already been discussed in that section of this study. Suffice it to say here that such an interpretation of "those days" in 24:22 seems to go against the flow of the immediate context and chooses a remote antecedent for the expression. Therefore, this approach to 24:29-31 is dubious in this respect.

### *Conclusion*

The most obvious distinction between the four views of 24:29-31 is that the preterist view is alone in denying that these verses refer to the second coming of Christ. It is concluded here that the other views are correct; the arguments for taking 24:29-31 as a symbolic description of the theological significance of the destruction of the temple are not convincing. Beyond this basic matter, the preterist-futurist view best handles the relationship of 24:29-31 to 24:15-28.

### MATTHEW 24:32-41

#### *Futurist View*

Though some futurists have succumbed to the allure of date-setting,<sup>54</sup> most take the implications of 24:36 seriously and speak of the imminent, "any moment," return of Christ. Most of the discussion among dispensationalists seems to be concerned with whether 24:40-41 speaks of those believers "taken" in pretribulational rapture or of those unbelievers "taken" in judgment. Those who look to the near context for analogy point out that those "taken" in the flood were judged (24:39). However, this analogy may be disputed since "took" in 24:39 is ἔηεν and "taken" in 24:40-41 is παραλαμβάνεται. Those with a broader approach to the analogy note that the angels will gather the elect and leave the non-elect (24:31). The former judgment view is generally held today,<sup>55</sup> and it better fits the perspective of traditional dispensationalism that the entire discourse has only a secondary application to the Church. Thus the emphasis upon alertness is intended for the people of God living during the tribulation, though it can have secondary application to the Church.

Problems with traditional dispensationalism's view that this discourse concerns Israel, not the Church, were addressed in the first

<sup>54</sup>The furor surrounding Edgar Whisenant's *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Could be in 1988* is the most recent example of the dangers of datesetting. Though Hal Lindsey's approach was mild in comparison to Whisenant's, it is profitable to consult Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Hal Lindsey's Prophetic Jigsaw Puzzle* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1985). Reviewed by David L. Turner in *GTJ* 7 (1986) 252-54.

<sup>55</sup>For the view that the rapture is not taught here see Barbieri, "Matthew," 79; Toussaint, *Matthew*, 281; and Walvoord, *Matthew*, 193-94.

major section of this study. The need for alertness is the Church's primary duty, not merely a secondary application. The preoccupation of some dispensationalists with the intricacies of who is taken and who is left seems to miss the urgent appeal of the passage for alertness. As Carson says, who is taken and who is left "is neither clear nor particularly important,"<sup>56</sup> since the crucial point is alertness in view of the unexpected separation which Christ's return will swiftly bring. One tends to wonder whether traditional dispensationalism's strict futurism has muffled the urgent ethical appeal of the passage.

The most pressing problem in this section for all of the views is the meaning of "this generation" (ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη), which "will not pass away until all these things are fulfilled" (24:34). Generally futurists take "this generation" as either the Jewish nation<sup>57</sup> or as the eschatological generation alive at the time of the fulfillment of this prophecy.<sup>58</sup> Therefore the verse is taken either as a promise that the nation of Israel will be preserved to the end or as a warning that those who see the fulfillment begin will live to see its consummation.

These approaches to "this generation" must be scrutinized carefully. Ridderbos is correct that the verse is turned into a truism if "this generation" refers merely to Israel as a nation or even to those alive at the end.<sup>59</sup> What is more, Jesus' use of γενεά in Matthew does not support such an idea. Thirteen of the forty NT uses of γενεά occur in Matthew. It is doubtful if any of them mean anything other than "the sum total of those born at the same time, . . . contemporaries."<sup>60</sup> Matt 24:34 is one of six texts in Matthew which couple γενεά with the demonstrative pronoun (11:16; 12:41, 42, 45; 23:36; 24:34). It is virtually certain that in all these Matthean uses the meaning is simply Jesus' contemporaries. Though at times a qualitative nuance is attached implicitly or explicitly (12:39, 45; 16:4; 17:17), the word never loses its quantitative or temporal force. Therefore, lexical support for the idea that the word means "nation" or "kind of people" is marginal or not nonexistent, in spite of assertions to the contrary sometimes found in the commentaries. Of course, traditional dispensationalism's view of γενεά is constrained by other factors. If γενεά refers to Jesus' contemporaries, and Jesus pronounces that they

<sup>56</sup>Carson, "Matthew," 509.

<sup>57</sup>E. Schuyler English, *Studies in the Gospel According to Matthew* (New York: Revell, 1935) 179; William Kelly, *Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Loizeaux, 1911) 451-53; and Rand, "Survey," 205-6.

<sup>58</sup>Barbieri, "Matthew," 78; and Toussaint, *Matthew*, 279-80.

<sup>59</sup>H. N. Ridderbos, *Commentary on Matthew*, trans. R. Togtman (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) 450.

<sup>60</sup>BAGD, 153-54. Cf. Matt 1:17 (4x); 11:16; 12:39, 41, 42, 45; 16:4; 17:17; 23:36; 24:34.



will not die before the great tribulation, then Jesus was wrong, and that is unthinkable. So to remove the tension it is convenient to redefine γενεά. However, the better part of wisdom is to rethink the strict futuristic grid which dispensationalists have traditionally placed upon 24:1-34.

### *Preterist View*

In this view Jesus announces that his contemporaries will live to see the destruction of Jerusalem. Since the second coming to earth, the topic of the second part of the disciples' question of 24:3, has not yet been mentioned, all that is involved here is the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in A.D. 70. Jesus' listeners will still be alive when that event occurs. Thus the preterist view has a simple answer to the problem of "this generation" in 24:34. In fact, it may not be an overstatement to say that this view is chiefly motivated by the desire to avoid this problem. The normal meaning of the word is accepted with great gusto, and sometimes other views are accused of basing their exegesis upon a preconceived theological bias: "Were it not for prior commitments to a particular eschatological [*sic*] view, the common reader would understand Jesus to mean that His own contemporaries would live to witness the great events He predicted."<sup>61</sup>

While the above stricture is not lacking in force, in reality every view of this discourse is unavoidably influenced by theological presuppositions. The preterist view commendably takes γενεά in its normal sense, but in order to maintain a high Christology it handles 24:29-31 in a highly questionable fashion, as already indicated. There is a better option, one which attempts to read 24:29-31 and γενεά in 24:34 naturally, all the while preserving a high Christology.

### *Traditional Preterist-Futurist View*

The traditional preterist-futurist approach to this section generally stresses the urgency of Christ's warning about alertness. Since it takes 24:29-31 as a reference to Christ's second coming, it is faced with tension when it comes to "this generation" in 24:34. Proponents of the view handle this tension differently. Hendriksen supplies six reasons why he takes γενεά as a reference to the nation of Israel.<sup>62</sup> Gundry first seems to favor the normal view of γενεά as "contemporaries" but then shifts to a qualitative emphasis on γενεά as a "kind" of people who will experience the tribulation Christ predicts.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup>Fowler, *Matthew*, 4.509.

<sup>62</sup>Hendriksen, *Matthew*, 868-69.

<sup>63</sup>Gundry, *Matthew*, 491.

This leaves the temporal extent of the word open. Ridderbos flirts with *γενεά* as “contemporaries” and seems to accept this temporal view in the recent English translation of his Matthew commentary. However, in *The Coming of the Kingdom* he leans to the qualitative view after a long discussion.<sup>64</sup> In his understanding *γενεά* refers to an objectionable mentality which rejects the very prophetic word which it will ironically experience in its own lifetime.<sup>65</sup> Thus he interprets *γενεά* much like Gundry.

The problem with this exegesis is its lexical base. While it is granted that *γενεά* may take on qualitative force from its context and modifiers, it cannot be demonstrated that a temporal force is ever absent in its NT usage. Carson does not overstate the case when he speaks of “highly artificial” attempts to overthrow the normal temporal meaning of the word, a word which “can only with the greatest difficulty be made to mean anything other than the generation living when Jesus spoke.”<sup>66</sup> But is it possible to maintain the normal temporal meaning of *γενεά* while interpreting 24:29–31 as a reference to the second coming of Christ? Some have attempted to do this by limiting *πάντα ταῦτα* in 24:34 to only the signs which came before the second coming of Christ. A case can be made for this based upon the use of *πάντα ταῦτα* in 24:33 as a reference to the budding of the fig tree which signals the nearness of the summer in 24:32. After all, seeing the buds (preliminary signs) is not the same as seeing summer (Christ’s return). This case can be strengthened by once again stressing that prophecy is not merely history written before it occurs. Prophetic perspective involves the union of individual events in a coalesced whole. By additional revelation and hindsight believers today can differentiate many of the individual events. Ridderbos expresses this well:

Here again we are confronted with the condensed and undifferentiated character of Jesus’ portrayal of the future. . . . The starting point for His whole speech was the coming destruction of the temple. Since from the perspective of prophecy this event was telescoped with the Lord’s great future, Jesus could say that the generation that witnessed the destruction of the temple “certainly would not pass away until all these things have happened.” He thus regarded the future in an undifferentiated manner. Later, in the light of fulfillment, it became evident that “all these things” would not come at once, and that they therefore would be seen only in part by the generation of Jesus’ day. On a factual level, there is no difference between this interpretation and the view

<sup>64</sup>Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 450–51; *The Coming of the Kingdom*, 500–502.

<sup>65</sup>Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, 502.

<sup>66</sup>Carson, “Matthew,” 507.

that the phrase "all these things" referred only to the signs. The two views are not identical, however, for in my interpretation Jesus did not use the phrase with that restriction in mind. Exegesis has to assume a historical viewpoint in places like this and base its conclusions on the prophetic nature of eschatology. . . .<sup>67</sup>

It is concluded here that the traditional preterist-futurist view best serves three important considerations in this text: (1) its genre as biblical prophecy, (2) the more natural understanding of 24:29-31, and (3) the lexical meaning of *γενεά*. Jesus' contemporaries will see "all these things," at least in their anticipatory fulfillment at the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem. In Jesus' perspective (24:36) his second coming to earth *could* have occurred immediately after the A.D. 70 conflagration. From a modern perspective these events are best related in a theologically unified anticipation/consummation framework. The passage is Hebrew prophecy, not modern historiography.

### *Revised Preterist-Futurist View*

Carson's articulation of this approach to 24:32-42 differs little from the above articulation of the traditional preterist-futurist view. The word *γενεά* in 24:34 is taken to refer to Jesus' contemporaries, who are repeatedly and pointedly warned about their need to be prepared for his return. "All these things" in 24:33-34 is interpreted to mean the preliminary signs of 24:4-28 which characterize the general course of the age. This is based upon the distinction between budding and summer which is observed in 24:32. Thus the signs during the course of the age demonstrate the certainty and nearness of the return of Christ but do not permit one to pinpoint its date (24:36).<sup>68</sup>

The strengths of this position center in its exegesis of "this generation" and "all these things." Both are handled with due deference to lexicography and immediate context. Only two quibbles need be mentioned. First, as argued earlier, Carson's semi-preterist approach to 24:4-28 is problematic in its handling of 24:15-21 as referring only to the A.D. 70 events, and in its hypothesis of a remote antecedent for "those days" in 24:22, which results in 24:22-28 referring to the entire interadvent age, not to A.D. 70 and the eschatological tribulation. This leads to a second concern related to the question of prophetic genre. It seems that Carson's approach to 24:32-42 would

<sup>67</sup>Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 451.

<sup>68</sup>Carson, "Matthew," 507. Agreeing that "all these things" in 24:33-34 refers to the signs, not the return of Christ, is C. A. Briggs, *The Messiah of the Gospels* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1894) 159-60.

only be strengthened by acknowledging some sort of double reference scheme, as this study has advocated. While a double reference perspective is incompatible with his exegesis of 24:4–28, it fits nicely into his exegesis of this section.

### *Conclusion*

The examination of the various views of 24:29–31 reveals a common thread of Christological concern. The point of departure is a high Christology requiring the absolute veracity of his every word. The tension is due to the “this generation” saying in 24:34. Futurists have traditionally resolved the tension with an extremely doubtful definition of “generation.” Preterists have resolved the tension with an extremely doubtful interpretation of 24:29–31. Both the traditional and revised preterist-futurist views take the generally accepted understandings of 24:29–31 and “generation” in 24:34. The tension is resolved by relying upon the genre of biblical prophecy and/or by limiting the antecedent of “all these things” in 24:33–34. These last two approaches involve considerable overlap and are generally much more successful in handling the tensions of the passage.

### CONCLUSION

Since conclusions have been inserted into each of the main sections of this study, there is no need to repeat them here. It has been suggested that the traditional preterist-futurist view is the most promising solution to the exegetical difficulties of this passage. It is believed that such a perspective is true to the genre of OT prophecy, and that Jesus’ discourse is in generic and theological continuity with the OT prophets. However, two concerns arise. First, the term “double reference” is problematic, and current alternatives are not much of an improvement. Second, and more crucial, the genre of biblical prophecy is not grasped sufficiently. It is good news that Hendrickson (Peabody, MA) plans to reprint Briggs’ *Messianic Prophecy*. However, fresh studies are needed from a current evangelical perspective.<sup>69</sup>

A point which calls for reflection concerns the relationship between exegesis and systematic theology. It is interesting to note how a particular exegesis of an individual passage comes to be linked with a certain theological system as if the exegesis is required by the system. No doubt this is the case at times, but not as often as is commonly assumed. John Martin has recently shown that “there is no single

<sup>69</sup>Perhaps Walter Kaiser’s recent work, *Back Toward the Future: Hints for Interpreting Biblical Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989) will make a positive contribution to this area of study.

dispensational approach to the Sermon on the Mount.”<sup>70</sup> With this I would concur, and I would add that there is no compelling reason for dispensationalists to take the futurist view of the Olivet Discourse. It appears that dispensationalists must come to terms with Matthew as a Gospel for the Church of all ages, not merely for an eschatological Jewish remnant. And since the similarity between Matthew 24 and Revelation 6 is often noted, it may be that dispensationalists should rethink their standard approach to this passage also.

The eschatological discourse of Christ in Matthew 24-25 stretches the interpreter to the limits of human understanding and Christian obedience. One must come to terms with two genres of biblical literature, narrative and prophecy. One must permit one's eschatological notions to be scrutinized and hopefully refined in the inevitable hermeneutical circle/spiral. One is confronted by the authoritative words of Jesus the Messiah to be alert and ready for the end, but these words tend to lose their force when read by affluent American Christians who have imbibed not a little of today's yuppie mentality. Why be so concerned about the end when things are going so well in the present?

A quick reading of Christ's eschatological discourse reveals that only about one third of it (perhaps as little as 24:1-31) is expressly didactic in nature. The rest (24:32-25:46) is parabolic and parenetic. The disciples on the Mount of Olives legitimately wanted to know about God's plan for the future, and so do we today. However, Jesus spent only half as much time on the bare facts of the future as he did on the implications of those facts. Those who emphasize theoretical reflection should be reminded to reflect upon duty as well. We have only begun when we have mastered the “what?” of the text. We complete our duty when we have served the “so what?”

“Therefore keep watch,  
because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.”

“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine,  
you did for me.”

<sup>70</sup> John Martin, “Dispensational Approaches to the Sermon on the Mount,” in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, ed. S. D. Toussaint and C. H. Dyer (Chicago: Moody, 1985) 35.



# A CLASSIFICATION OF CONDITIONAL SENTENCES BASED ON SPEECH ACT THEORY

RICHARD A. YOUNG

*The assumption that the meaning of conditional sentences can be determined solely by surface structure features, such as tense, mood, and particles, severely restricts the exegetical task. The meaning of any utterance cannot be understood apart from the speaker's intent, the situational and linguistic context, as well as the linguistic form. Speech act theory provides objective criteria to help the exegete integrate these elements. When applied to conditional sentences, speech act theory yields more meaningful results than traditional approaches.*

\* \* \*

## INTRODUCTION

THE approach one takes to understand an utterance rests on underlying assumptions concerning how thoughts are communicated through language. Traditional approaches to Greek grammar have not yielded satisfactory results in classifying the meanings of conditional sentences. Greek rhetoricians debated the meaning of Greek conditional sentences.<sup>1</sup> In reference to conditional sentences, Robertson remarked, "In truth the doctors have disagreed themselves and the rest have not known how to go."<sup>2</sup> Blass and Debrunner observe, "The classical grammars are also hopelessly at variance."<sup>3</sup> Recent work, however, in linguistics and philosophy offer potential for a fresh understanding of Greek conditional sentences.

<sup>1</sup>Callimachus (*Epigrammatum Fragmenta* 393) remarks, "Even the crows on the rooftops are discussing the question as to which conditionals are true." Cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Grammaticos* 309. For the debate see Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Dogmaticos* 2.112-23.

<sup>2</sup>A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934) 1004.

<sup>3</sup>F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961) 189.



## TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

Most modern grammarians of NT Greek follow Robertson's classification of conditional sentences.<sup>4</sup> Robertson essentially follows the system of Gildersleeve and Winer in identifying four classes of conditionals based on the surface structure phenomena of mood and tense.<sup>5</sup> Meanings are then assigned to each class.

The first class condition is identified by  $\epsilon\iota$  with an indicative verb in the protasis and a verb of any tense and mood in the apodosis.<sup>6</sup> Because the first class uses the indicative mood (the mood of reality) in the protasis, it is commonly said to mean that the protasis is "determined as fulfilled." Robertson claims that the speaker assumes the reality of his premise. The premise may or may not be actually true. If the premise is objectively true, it may be rendered with "since." Otherwise the speaker is either falsely assuming the reality of the premise or assuming its reality for the sake of argument.

The second class condition is identified by an  $\epsilon\iota$  with a secondary tense indicative mood verb in the protasis and the particle  $\alpha\upsilon\tau$  (usually) with a secondary tense verb in the apodosis.<sup>7</sup> The second class condition is said to mean that the premise is determined as unfulfilled. The indicative is used because the speaker is of the persuasion that the premise (protasis) which he sets forth is contrary to fact. The premise may actually be contrary to fact (John 5:46), or it may be contrary to what the speaker believes to be the facts (Luke 7:39).

The third class condition is identified by  $\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\nu$  with a subjunctive mood verb in the protasis and a verb with any tense and mood in the apodosis (usually present or future tense and indicative mood).<sup>8</sup> According to Robertson this construction means that the premise is undetermined but has a prospect of determination. Since the subjunc-

<sup>4</sup>Notable among modern grammarians who do not follow Robertson are C. F. D. Moule (*An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968] 148-52), E. Burton (*Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898] 100-112), and W. LaSor (*Handbook of New Testament Greek* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973] 2.225).

<sup>5</sup>Robertson, *Grammar*, 1004-27.

<sup>6</sup>There are about 300 examples of this surface structure phenomenon in the NT. J. L. Boyer ("First Class Conditions: What Do They Mean?" *GTJ* 2 [1981] 75-114) counts 308 using GRAMCORD. It may be questionable whether all the examples that Boyer cites represent conditional sentences. J. W. Roberts ("Some Aspects of Conditional Sentences in the Greek New Testament," *Restoration Quarterly* 4 [1960] 72) counts 339.

<sup>7</sup>There are about 50 examples of this surface structure form in the NT. J. L. Boyer ("Second Class Conditions in New Testament Greek," *GTJ* 3 [1982] 81) counts 47. J. W. Roberts ("Some Aspects of Conditional Sentences," 72) counts 51.

<sup>8</sup>There are about 300 examples of this structure in the NT. J. L. Boyer ("Third [and Fourth] Class Conditions," *GTJ* 3 [1982] 163) counts 277. J. W. Roberts ("Some Aspects of Conditional Sentences," 72) counts 332.



tive is a mood of unreality or uncertainty, its use indicates that the premise has not yet become a reality. The third class is essentially a future condition. The speaker regards the premise as having a greater probability of becoming a reality than would have been true if he had used a fourth class condition, which uses the optative mood. The speaker does not assume the premise to be true or untrue.

The fourth class condition is identified by εἰ with an optative mood verb in the protasis and the particle ἄν with an optative mood verb in the apodosis. No example of this construction exists in the NT having both the protasis and apodosis.<sup>9</sup> It is said that the premise of the fourth class condition is undetermined with remote prospect of determination. The fourth class condition is understood to indicate a future (undetermined) condition with a less probable chance of fulfillment than is true with a third class condition.

#### INADEQUACY OF THE TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDING

The traditional approach to Greek conditionals is adequate for classifying the surface structure phenomena. It is inadequate, however, for describing the semantic range of conditional sentences. For example, in Luke 22:42 there is a first class condition: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me" (*NIV*). The premise is not true; it was the Father's will for Jesus to suffer. It cannot be said that Jesus assumes the truth of the premise for the sake of argument, for that understanding of the statement would result in a serious theological problem, namely, disunity in the Godhead. The other option, that Jesus falsely assumed the truth of the premise, is highly questionable. It could be said with Boyer<sup>10</sup> that first class conditions merely represent a simple if/then relation. Grammatically this is correct, but semantically it barely scratches the surface. What did Jesus mean by the utterance? Why did he say it?

In Gal 4:15 there is a second class condition: "If you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me" (*NIV*). The traditional interpretation (contrary-to-fact condition) would yield the following understanding: "If you could have done so (which for some reason you could not do), you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me (which of course you did not do because the premise was never realized)."<sup>11</sup> This is nothing more than

<sup>9</sup>Roberts ("Some Aspects of Conditional Sentences," 72) counts 12 examples of the partial construction in the NT, but Boyer ("Third [and Fourth] Class Conditions," 170) denies that any exist.

<sup>10</sup>Boyer, "First Class Conditions: What Do They Mean?" 81-82.

<sup>11</sup>Boyer ("Second Class Conditions in New Testament Greek," 83) explains the meaning of second class conditions by means of a similar expanded paraphrase. He remarks, "It states a condition which as a matter of fact has not been met and follows with a statement of what would have been true if it had."

a truism that does not say anything at all. The exegete must realize that the situation was emotionally charged and that Paul is expressing something more than meaningless double-talk.

The main cause for exegetical problems with the traditional approach stems from a simplistic view of semantics.<sup>12</sup> There is an overemphasis on a one-to-one correspondence between form and meaning, which does not fully recognize the semantic range of εἰ or that one type of condition may be represented by various surface structure forms. As observed in the above survey, conditional sentences are classified according to surface structure phenomena (mood and tense) and then a meaning is attached to each class.<sup>13</sup> The assumption that there is a one-to-one correspondence between form and meaning is often violated in actual usage. Lexical forms usually have many meanings (e.g., the word "run"); likewise, grammatical constructions often have multiple meanings (e.g., the Greek genitive case). Any attempt to uncover the meaning of conditionals must be based on a more productive theory of semantics.

Furthermore, the traditional approach fails to recognize the role of the situational context in the communication act.<sup>14</sup> To interpret the meaning of language purely on the basis of its linguistic features is a

<sup>12</sup>"Semantics" as used here refers to the study of total meaning rather than the meaning of language structure. This includes the meaning of the propositional content of the linguistic structure, the propositional content of inferential material, and the intent of the speaker. Since these elements are necessary for understanding an utterance, they must be part of the study of total meaning. Semantics then will be used in its broadest sense and closely associated with the concept of understanding. For an extensive bibliography on semantics, see S. DeLancy and T. Payne, "Semantics Master Bibliography," *Notes on Linguistics* 37 (1987) 5-43.

<sup>13</sup>Some have rightly observed a semantic overlap between the four classes of conditions. For the similarity between a first class form in which the protasis is obviously false and a second class form see M. Winger ("Unreal Conditions in the Letters of Paul," *JBL* 105 [1986] 110-12). Winger (p. 111) states, "Grammarians generally agree that writers of ancient Greek—classical or Hellenistic—sometimes stated conditions they regarded as unreal without using secondary tenses or ἄν. Thus, the unreal *form* is only an option; any past or present condition may be unfulfilled, but the unreal condition is explicitly, and therefore emphatically, unfulfilled." Boyer ("First Class Conditions: What Do They Mean?" 76) isolated 36 first class examples from the NT in which the protasis was obviously false. Boyer correctly concluded that every sentence with a first class form will not fit the meaning attached to it by Robertson. Yet what Boyer does is simply to replace Robertson's meaning with another, retaining the one-to-one correspondence between form and meaning. Burton (*Moods and Tenses*, 104-5) argues that εἰ with the future tense conveys the same idea as εἰάν with the subjunctive. There are 22 examples of εἰ with the future tense in the NT.

<sup>14</sup>The context includes such things as the shared experience of the speaker and audience, the shared knowledge about the culture, the immediate situational setting, the prior statements of the same and related discussions, the relationship between speaker and audience, the formality of the situation, and the social register of the speaker and hearer.

basic fallacy that grammarians are prone to make. Situational context influences the meaning of an utterance in two ways. (1) Speakers often allow the context to communicate part of their message for them. Why say something that is obvious and insult your audience's intelligence? As in most forms of human behavior, there is a principle of least effort. People say just enough to be understood in light of the situation. They allow the audience to compare what was said with the context and to draw the proper inference, thereby arriving at the intended meaning. The speaker may leave part of his propositional content or his intent to be inferred by his audience. (2) The speaker may be influenced by pragmatic concerns and modify how he says something. Sometimes a conditional construction is used as a politeness marker when requesting a superior to do something: "If you wouldn't mind . . .," or "If you would be willing. . . ." This interaction between linguistic form and situational context implies that the linguistic form cannot be adequately explained apart from considering the communication situation. How much is actually said and how it is said will depend on various pragmatic factors, such as formality and social register.

Little attention has been given to indirect utterances and the distinction between propositional meaning and use. A speaker may be influenced by pragmatic concerns to the extent that he will use a surface structure phenomenon in a way that is alien to its literal meaning.<sup>15</sup> If a wife makes the statement, "The car is dirty," and her husband replies, "You're right," and then continues to read the sports page, he is likely to exasperate his poor wife. Her utterance was not really a statement, it was a request. Indirect speech acts still retain their literal meaning. The car is indeed dirty. The wife, however, meant not only what she said, but something else in addition. The questions that concern the semanticist are, "What were the pragmatic influences that caused her to express her desires in the form of a statement?" "Is it possible to develop criteria or rules to define such use of language and to recover the speaker's intent?"<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Common examples of disjunction between meaning and use would be idioms, figures of speech, and one part of speech used for another. More relevant to our study of conditional sentences is where one type of sentence is used for another. Questions are often equivalent to statements. For example, "What shall it profit a man . . . ?" (Matt 16:26). No answer is expected, rather, it is a rhetorical question that conveys an emphatic negative assertion, "It will surely not profit a man. . . ." Questions can be used for commands or request, "Will you please close the door?" or "Can you pass the salt?" In the latter, the ability of the person addressed is hardly the issue. Statements may be used for commands, "It's rather drafty in here" could mean "Please close the window."

<sup>16</sup>R. A. Jacob and P. S. Rosenbaum (*Transformations, Style, and Meaning* [New York: Wiley, 1971] 1) state, "No one knows the exact nature of the relationship

There needs to be more attention given to a speaker's intent when interpreting what any utterance means. Both the propositional content of what is said and how the speaker uses the words have direct bearing on the proper understanding of an utterance. If a hearer simply decodes the propositional content in the question "Can you pass the salt?" he might respond with an affirmative answer rather than the desired action. He would not have understood what was said because he did not consider the intent of the speaker. The goal of biblical exegesis is to understand what the writers of Scripture said; this cannot be done by viewing the text (on any level) apart from the intent of the author/speaker.

Semantics is perhaps the least precise and most difficult subdivision of language study. The reason for this is that there are a great number of factors involved in the meaning of human communication, such as the intent of the author, the situational context, shared knowledge, the words used, the arrangement of the words, the inflection of the voice, discourse features such as prominence and structure, the attitude of the speaker, and the relation of the speaker to the audience. There is much more involved in meaning than simply linguistic phenomena. The questions are how do all these factors interact and is it possible to devise a theory of meaning that takes everything into account?

#### A NEW APPROACH: IMPLICATURE AND SPEECH ACT THEORY<sup>17</sup>

The theory of "implicature" was proposed by Grice in a series of lectures at Harvard in 1967.<sup>18</sup> Grice recognized that the meaning of communication is dependent not simply on what is said, but also on what is implicated (implied). He distinguished between the inferences that one could possibly draw from an utterance and the inferences

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between form and meaning. . . . One of the major goals of linguistics, perhaps the major one, is to make this relationship explicit."

<sup>17</sup>The theory of implicature and speech act theory are subdivisions of the study of pragmatics. Pragmatics is broadly defined as the study of language usage. It is concerned with the relation between context and language and how language usage affects language structure; cf. S. C. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1983) 5-35.

<sup>18</sup>His work has only been partially published; see H. P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 3, *Speech Acts* (New York: Academic Press, 1975) 41-58. A recent development of Grice's theory is relevance theory; cf. D. Sperber and D. Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); D. Sperber and D. Wilson, "An Outline of Relevance Theory," *Notes on Linguistics* 39 (1987) 5-24; Ernst-August Gutt, "Unravelling Meaning: An Introduction to Relevance Theory," *Notes on Translation* 112 (April 1986) 10-20; and Ernst-August Gutt, "What is the Meaning We Translate," *Occasional Papers in Translation and Textlinguistics* 1 (1987) 31-58.

that the speaker intended. The latter he called implicatures.<sup>19</sup> This concept arose out of five principles (or rules) that he formulated by which efficient, rational, and cooperative use of language is achieved.<sup>20</sup> Since meaning is conveyed through both the linguistic activity and the situational context, it follows that there is more communicated than what is said. "The words and sentences on the page are reliable clues, but they cannot be the total picture. The more pressing question is how the texts function in human interaction."<sup>21</sup>

Two pioneers of speech act theory are J. L. Austin<sup>22</sup> and John R. Searle.<sup>23</sup> Their basic thesis is that people actually perform acts by using speech patterns. Austin begins by saying that there are a number of utterances that are not reports about reality and therefore not subject to being true or false. Instead, these utterances are actions (e.g., "I name this ship Queen Elizabeth," or "I bet you a dollar it will rain tomorrow"). By making the utterance the speaker is actually performing the action. Such use of language is termed "performative." Thus, Austin theorizes, language may be used either to say something about reality (constative utterance) or to do something (performative utterance).<sup>24</sup>

Often the performative will be marked in the surface structure by a definite formula: the first person singular pronoun, the present tense, and a performative verb, such as promise, warn, thank, command, congratulate, or apologize.<sup>25</sup> Other times it will not be overtly

<sup>19</sup>Distinction should also be made between Grice's concept of conversational implicature and logical implication, which is based solely on semantic content.

<sup>20</sup>These principles are as follows: (1) The Cooperative Principle: the participants' contributions are in keeping with the common purpose or direction of the exchange; (2) The Principle of Quality: the participants do not normally say things they know to be false; (3) The Principle of Quantity: the participants' contribution is only as informative as required by the purposes of the exchange; (4) The Principle of Relevance: the participants' contributions are relevant to the discussion; and (5) The Principle of Manner: the participants normally attempt to be brief and orderly, avoiding obscurity and ambiguity. See Grice, "Logic and Conversation," 45-47.

<sup>21</sup>R. de Beaugrande and W. Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics* (New York: Longman, 1981) 3. They go on to say (p. 35) that a text is the result of an unconscious process of decision and selection which cannot be interpreted in isolation from those factors that were involved in its formation. "We must constantly seek to discover and systemize the motivations and strategies according to which the creation and utilization of texts are kept in operation."

<sup>22</sup>J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (New York: Oxford University, 1962).

<sup>23</sup>John R. Searle, *Speech Acts. An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (New York: Cambridge University, 1969).

<sup>24</sup>Austin himself came to reject this distinction since even statements about reality can be expressed using a performative verb, "I hereby state that X." Thus all utterances are performatives.

<sup>25</sup>Austin (*How to Do Things with Words*, 149) claimed that there are over a thousand such words in English. If a verb could collocate with the word "hereby" ("I



marked in the surface structure. For example, "Can you pass the salt?" would be the implicit form of "I request that you pass me the salt."<sup>26</sup> Thus, there are two categories of performatives: explicit performatives (marked in surface structure by standard formula) and implicit performatives (not marked in surface structure by standard formula).<sup>27</sup>

Performatives can carry a certain force (rebuke, warning, etc.) or can achieve a certain effect (conviction, persuasion, etc.). The first is called an illocutionary act (e.g., "He urged me to shoot her") and the second is called a perlocutionary act (e.g., "He persuaded me to shoot her"). If an illocutionary act fulfills all its necessary conditions, it will produce in the hearer a recognition of the intent of the utterance.

In order for communication to be effective, the speaker must get the hearer to recognize the intent of his utterance. This may be accomplished in several ways—which one the speaker chooses depends on situational factors. He may indicate his intent in a conventional manner by (1) the standard formula, (2) a recognized device in the surface structure other than the standard formula,<sup>28</sup> (3) a sentence-type that represents a certain illocutionary force,<sup>29</sup> or in a nonconven-

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hereby promise that X"), it was deemed a performative verb. Austin then used his collection of verbs as the basis for classifying speech act types into five groups. However, it is Searle's classification of speech act types which is more commonly accepted today, but even his scheme is not without opponents. According to Searle (*Expression and Meaning* [New York: Cambridge University, 1979] 1–29) there are five types of utterances: (1) assertives, which commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition (e.g., assert, conclude, affirm); (2) directives by which the speaker attempts to get the hearer to do something (e.g., request, question); (3) commissives, which commit the speaker to some future course of action (e.g., promise, offer); (4) expressives, which express a psychological state (e.g., thanking, apologizing); and (5) declarations, which affect immediate changes in the state of affairs (e.g., declaring war, christening, excommunicating). B. Fraser ("Hedged Performatives" in Cole and Morgan, *Speech Acts*, 187–210) groups speech acts into eight categories based on speaker's intent.

<sup>26</sup>Some suggest that implicit performatives are merely idioms. Levinson (*Pragmatics*, 268–70) argues to the contrary. Among his reasons are: (1) indirect speech acts may be responded to literally, indicating that they retain their literal meaning (e.g., "Can you pass the salt?" "Yes I can, here it is"); and (2) many indirect speech acts can be transferred literally into another language since the principles of their formation are not language specific.

<sup>27</sup>All implicit performatives can be expressed explicitly with the formula "I (hereby) V<sub>p</sub> (you) (that) S," where V<sub>p</sub> is a performative verb and S is an embedded sentence.

<sup>28</sup>Levinson (*Pragmatics*, 233) observes that the force of implicit performatives could be indicated by mood ("Shut the door" rather than "I order you to shut the door"), particles ("Therefore, X" rather than "I conclude that X"), adverbs ("I'll be there without fail" rather than "I promise that I will be there"), and even intonation of voice ("It's going to change" rather than "I state [or question] that it's going to change").

<sup>29</sup>The interrogative sentence is normally associated with the act of questioning, an imperative with commanding, and a declarative with stating. Yet this correspondence is

TABLE 1

*Necessary Conditions for Requests and Assertions<sup>a</sup>*

<i>Conditions</i>	<i>Requests</i>	<i>Assertions</i>
Propositional Content	Future act of hearer	Any proposition
Preparatory	Speaker believes hearer can do act It is not obvious that hearer would do act without being asked	Speaker has evidence for the truth of proposition It is not obvious to speaker that hearer knows proposition
Sincerity	Speaker wants hearer to do act	Speaker believes proposition
Essential	Counts as an attempt to get hearer to do act	Counts as an undertaking to the effect that proposition represents an actual state of affairs

<sup>a</sup> Adapted from Searle, *Speech Acts*, 66–67.

tional manner by (4) framing his words in such a way (without any commonly recognized surface structure marker) so that the audience can make the proper inferences. The first would be a direct speech act; the other three would be indirect speech acts.

By avoiding the standard illocutionary force marker a speaker can soften an otherwise harsh performative (“Can you pass the salt?” instead of “I request you to pass me the salt”). It is probable that speakers of Koine Greek used conditional sentences to tone down the force of certain acts such as rebuke or request. When Martha rebuked the Lord for not being there to prevent Lazarus from dying, she used the form of a conditional sentence: “If you had been here, my brother would not have died” (John 11:21). If Martha’s utterance is analyzed according to the traditional understanding of second class conditions, her intention will not be understood.

If some performatives are not marked in the surface structure by the standard formula, there needs to be some criteria for exegetes to determine what type is taking place. Searle argues that speech acts “are performed in accordance with certain rules for the use of linguistic elements.”<sup>30</sup> He devised a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for speech acts to be successfully performed in a given utterance (see Table).

not strictly observed. For example, the explicit performative “I request that you close the door” could be communicated with an interrogative (“Can you close the door?”), an imperative (“Close the door”), or a declarative (“I would be very happy if you’d close the door”). Some would classify sentence types that are recognized as expressing a certain performative act as explicit rather than implicit performatives (e.g., imperatives for expressing a command).

<sup>30</sup>Searle, *Speech Acts*, 16.



From his conditions, Searle derived a set of rules for the use of the illocutionary force indicator.<sup>31</sup> He has since modified his theory to accommodate Grice's theory of implicature by adding criteria to help determine the illocutionary force of indirect speech acts, e.g., to determine when the speaker is asking the hearer to pass him the salt and when he is merely concerned with the hearer's ability to do so. After analyzing various indirect requests, Searle proposed the following generalizations: (1) a speaker can make an indirect request by either stating that or asking if the propositional content condition concerning the future act of the hearer is in effect (e.g., "Do you have change for a dollar?"). (2) A speaker can make an indirect request by either stating that or asking if the preparatory condition concerning the hearer's ability to do an act has efficacy (e.g., "Can you pass the salt?"). (3) A speaker can make an indirect request by stating that (not asking if) the sincerity condition concerning his desire to the hearer to do an act is true (e.g., "I wish you wouldn't do that"). (4) A speaker can make an indirect request by either stating that or asking if there are sufficient reasons for doing an act (e.g., "You had better go now"). (5) A speaker can make an indirect request by asking if the hearer wants to do an act (e.g., "Would you like to go to the store?").<sup>32</sup>

Indirect speech acts which are constructed by questioning or stating one of the necessary conditions are called conventional. Some, however, do not follow this pattern; e.g., "Boy, I'm starving" can be used for a request. Such nonconventional indirect speech acts seemingly violate Grice's principles of communication and place the burden on the hearer to make the proper inference.

The hearer can usually discern that an utterance is a certain type of performative by inference from what was said in light of the context.<sup>33</sup> For example, the utterance "There is a bull in the field" could either be a simple remark or a warning. It all depends on which

<sup>31</sup>Rules for the illocutionary force indicating device of a request are as follows. (1) The Propositional Content Rule: the request is to be uttered only in the context of a sentence or longer stretch of discourse. The utterance predicates a future act of the hearer. (2) The First Preparatory Rule: the request is to be uttered only if the speaker believes the hearer can do the act. (3) The Second Preparatory Rule: the request is to be uttered only if it is not obvious that the hearer would do the act without being asked. (4) The Sincerity Rule: the request is to be uttered only if the speaker wants the hearer to do the act. (5) The Essential Rule: the utterance of the request counts as an attempt to get the hearer to do the act. See Searle, *Speech Acts*, 62-63.

<sup>32</sup>John R. Searle, "Indirect Speech Acts," in Cole and Morgan, *Speech Acts*, 59-82. The essay was reprinted in Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 30-57.

<sup>33</sup>Searle (*Expression and Meaning*, 32) states, "In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer."

side of the fence the person being addressed is standing! In the same way one can infer from the context and what was said that Martha's utterance (John 11:21) has the illocutionary force of a rebuke.

Basically there are two elements involved in understanding an utterance: (1) the propositional meaning, or what was said, and (2) the intent of the speaker, or why it was said (the illocutionary force).<sup>34</sup> In some cases the two elements are not detachable; the propositional content includes the force indicating device. If the fellow picking daisies on the other side of the fence recognized only the propositional meaning of "There is a bull in the field," he would probably end up being gored. He may have been able to parse every word and to look up the meanings in a lexicon, but he would have failed to understand because he missed the intent. Both elements should be recognized as an interconnected unit. Illocutionary force then is an aspect of meaning that can be described in terms of conditions or rules. Propositional content conveys what is being said, and the illocutionary force conveys how it is to be taken. To understand the statements in Scripture, exegetes must be sensitive not only to the propositional meaning but also to devices that mark illocutionary force.

#### ANALYSIS OF CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

Speech act theory categorizes utterances according to function rather than form. There is greater exegetical and homiletical value in classifying conditionals in this way, for it brings the interpreter closer to the speaker's intent. When viewed through the speech act model, all conditionals are seen as implicit performatives which are used to do something in addition to stating a condition; i.e., to persuade the listener, to make a strong assertion, to manipulate the listener, to give an exhortation, to express a respectful rebuke, to ask something in a polite way, to justify one's self, to mock someone, or to convey a lament. Pragmatic reasons cause a speaker to use a conditional instead of a more direct expression. The following is a partial classification of conditionals on the basis of function.

#### *Rebuke*

To soften a rebuke and make it more respectful, it may be cloaked in a conditional sentence or some other rhetorical device. Shakespeare has said, "Your 'if' is the only peacemaker; much virtue

<sup>34</sup>Searle (*Intentionality* [New York: Cambridge University, 1983] 27), in discussing the relation between illocutionary force and intentionality, states, "To characterize them [utterances] as beliefs, fears, hopes, and desires is already to ascribe intentionality to them."

in 'if'."<sup>35</sup> The necessary conditions (in terms of Searle's theory) for a rebuke are that the hearer performed an act in the past (propositional condition), the speaker does not believe that the act was in his best interest (preparatory condition), the act angered the speaker (sincerity condition), and the speaker intends his expression as a reprimand (essential condition). Indirect rebukes may be made by questioning or stating any one of the above conditions. For example, a speaker may question why the hearer did an act ("Why didn't you get the car fixed?"), or he may state that an act was not in his best interest ("You sure got us in a jam this time"). A speaker may combine the propositional content with what would have been in his best interest ("If you had gotten the car fixed, we wouldn't be stranded out in the middle of nowhere").

An example of a conditional sentence used as a rebuke is found in John 11:21, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died."<sup>36</sup> A number of factors were involved in the formation of Martha's utterance. Her brother had just died. She was in deep sorrow and perhaps angered that Jesus had not been there to heal Lazarus's sickness. Martha was not in the frame of mind to begin a discourse in logic with her teacher. The sight of Jesus only caused her emotions to become more agitated. This charged emotional state then surfaced in a rebuke. The most important factor involved in the formation of Martha's utterance was the social register between her and Jesus. She was his devoted follower, having great respect and admiration for him as her teacher. The last thing she would want to do is to offend him. Because of this, she softened her rebuke by avoiding the illocutionary force marker and framing it in the form of a conditional sentence. The explicit form would have been, "I hereby rebuke you for not being here and preventing my brother from dying."

### *Lament*

Consider the statement, "If my husband were still alive, I would be so happy." If it is not known that the husband is dead, the speaker is expressing hope; if it is known that the husband is dead, the speaker is expressing a lament. The protasis of a conditional used to express a lament is contrary to fact. About one-fourth of the so-called second class conditionals in the NT express lament. The necessary

<sup>35</sup> *As You Like It*, V.iv.108.

<sup>36</sup> This was the initial statement that both Mary and Martha made when they saw Jesus (John 11:21, 32). Mary's utterance, however, could be a lament. Since most of the necessary conditions for a rebuke and lament are the same, many of their indirect forms could be constructed in the same way. The observation that Mary fell down at Jesus' feet and wept suggests that her utterance was a lament rather than a rebuke.

conditions for a lament are that an event happened in the past (propositional condition), the speaker does not believe that the event (which he believes to have occurred) was in the best interest of himself or the hearer (preparatory condition), the speaker is grieved because of the event (sincerity condition), and the speaker counts his utterance as expressing sorrow (necessary condition). Indirect laments may be conveyed by stating the event the speaker would like to have happened (e.g., "I wish that John had not gotten aboard flight 256" or "If John had taken another flight, he would still be with us").

In Matt 11:21 a conditional is used to express a lament: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." The explicit form of the lament is "I hereby lament that you did not repent as Tyre and Sidon would have because of the miracles you saw."

### *Argue*

The illocutionary act of arguing (i.e., an attempt by a speaker to persuade the hearer to accept his opinion) is very common in conditionals. Two rules of inference are involved in the use of conditionals for arguing (these rules will be illustrated by the conditional statement, "If I get my car fixed, then I will come to see you"). *Modus ponens* (method of affirming) is used to argue that the consequent is true by affirming the antecedent ("I fixed my car. Therefore, I will come to see you"). *Modus tollens* (method of denial) is used to argue that the antecedent is false by denying the consequent ("I did not come to see you. Therefore, I did not get my car fixed"). No valid conclusion can be drawn regarding the consequent by denying the antecedent ("I did not get my car fixed. I may or may not come to see you depending on whether I can get another ride") or regarding the antecedent by affirming the consequent ("I came to see you. I may or may not have fixed my car. Actually, someone else gave me a ride"). Thus, in order for a conditional to be used to argue a point, both parties must agree that the "if" clause is true or the "then" clause is false.<sup>37</sup> The point of agreement does not need to be asserted in the text; it may be understood from the context.

An example of a first class conditional used for a *modus tollens* argument is found in Matt 12:26: καὶ εἰ ὁ Σατανᾶς τὸν Σατανᾶν ἐκβάλλει, ἐφ' ἑαυτὸν ἐμερίσθη / 'And if Satan casts out Satan, he is

<sup>37</sup>Cf. I. Copi, *Introduction to Logic* (New York: Macmillan, 1961) 274-77. Some of the ideas in this section have been adapted from J. K. Baima, "Making Valid Conclusions from Greek Conditional Sentences" (Th.M. Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1986).

divided against himself'. It is clear from the following rhetorical question ("How then will his kingdom stand?") that the consequent is false. Satan's kingdom does stand and he is not divided against himself. Since the consequent is false, then the antecedent must also be false. Jesus, then, is arguing that Satan does not cast out Satan. He is not merely assuming the verity of the antecedent for the sake of argument (in which case his own position would be indeterminate); he is arguing for its falsity. This then becomes the basis for the rest of the argument of the passage (Matt 12:27-28).

A second class conditional using the *modus tollens* form of argument is found in Luke 7:39: Οὗτος εἰ ἦν προφήτης, ἐγίνωσκεν ἂν τίς καὶ ποταπὴ ἡ γυνὴ ἣτις ἅπτεται αὐτοῦ / 'If this man were a prophet he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner' (Luke 7:39, *NIV*). Robertson states, "The Pharisee here assumed that Jesus is not a prophet because he allowed the sinful woman to wash his feet."<sup>38</sup> The pharisee, however, was not merely assuming the case, he was convinced that Jesus was not a prophet. By denying the consequent ("Jesus does not know what kind of woman is touching him"), the pharisee was seeking to persuade the others that Jesus was not a prophet.

Many first class conditions use *modus ponens* to argue for the truth of the consequent. The truth of the antecedent is often clearly the point of agreement and thus not explicitly affirmed. In such cases, εἰ may be translated "since." For example, in Rom 3:29-30 Paul argues that the Jews do not have sole claim on God: "Since God is indeed one, then he is God of the Gentiles as well." Paul used the common agreement regarding the unity of God to argue for the truth of the consequence.

### *Request*

Sometimes a speaker will frame a request or command in the form of a conditional sentence for the sake of being polite. An employee would not barge into his boss's office and bluntly demand a raise. Rather, he would soften his request with "If you would consider" or the like. The "if" clause is a mitigator or politeness marker.

There is a polarity between being direct (i.e., "I command you to pass me the salt" or "Give me the salt") and being polite (i.e., "Can you pass the salt" or "If you wouldn't mind, I would like some salt"). A speaker would tend toward politeness if the situation is formal, the social status of the hearer is above that of the speaker, there are others listening, the hearer is in close proximity to the speaker, or if the speaker desires the conversation to continue. The demands for politeness usually supersede the need for clarity.

<sup>38</sup>Robertson, *Grammar*, 1012.

An example of a conditional used for a request is found in Matt 17:4: εἰ θέλεις, ποιήσω ὥδε τρεῖς σκηνάς / 'If you wish, I will put up three shelters' (*NIV*). The impetuous Peter might normally have blurted, out, "Let me put up three shelters." But the awe of the situation—seeing Jesus in his radiant splendor conversing with Moses and Elijah—led Peter to frame his request in a politer form using a conditional.

Jesus' request in the garden of Gethsemane ("If it is possible, may this cup be taken from me" [Matt 26:39; cf. Luke 22:42 and Mark 14:36]) is perplexing. One line of reasoning argues that the "if" clause introduces an indirect request asking whether the preparatory condition of the hearer's ability to do the requested act has efficacy. The utterance would then be after the analogy of "Can you pass the salt?" The sincerity of the request is explained by saying that the belief that the act was possible arose from the human nature of Jesus, which was not yet in perfect harmony with the desire of the Father. This disharmony perhaps was due to a temptation to avoid the path of suffering, but nevertheless, it is said, Jesus recognizes the impossibility of circumventing the cross in his second prayer, "If (since) it is not possible . . ." (Matt 26:42) and accepts the will of his Father. Such a line of interpretation does not do justice to the hypostatic union between the divine and human in Jesus. A second line of reasoning understands the "if" clause as an expressive, not a directive. That is, the "if" clause expresses a condition necessary for the hearer to perform the requested act, but both the hearer and the speaker realize that the "if" clause is impossible (i.e., false). In such a situation, the conditional makes no logical sense (see the discussion of conditionals used to argue above), but makes perfect sense if it is understood as expressing the speaker's feelings or needs. For example, if a boy had a particular dislike for a certain girl, he might say to his friend, "If you give me a million dollars, I'll ask her out for a date." Both he and his friend realize that the friend does not have a million dollars; thus the speaker is not questioning the hearer's ability to meet a necessary condition (he already knows that he cannot meet the condition) but is using a conditional form to express his aversion to dating that particular girl. Thus, Matt 26:39 can be understood not as a request that the immutable God reverse one of his eternal decrees, but as expressing the agony Jesus felt as he faced the cross event.

### *Assert*

The necessary conditions for an assertion are the same as for an argument except that the assertion is not an attempt to convince the hearer of a proposition. Assertions are recognized in conditionals



when the “then” clause does not follow logically the “if” clause.<sup>39</sup> For example, in the sentence “If Hitler was a military genius, then I’m a monkey’s uncle,” the consequence is so obviously false that the sentence is in fact a strong negative assertion—“Hitler was in no way a military genius.” Most uses of conditionals in the NT for assertion are a form of Hebraic oath in which only the “if” clause is stated; the “then” clause is omitted because the conclusion is unthinkable or abominable.

An example of a conditional used to make an assertion is found in Mark 8:12: εἰ δοθήσεται τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ σημεῖον. A literal translation would be, “If a sign will be given to this generation. . . .” An idiomatic translation that captures the illocutionary force of the speaker would be, “A sign will not be given to this generation.” Asseverations marked by aposiopesis, such as Mark 8:12, most likely reflect Semitic influence. Mark, however, made no attempt to explain the Semitism to his Roman audience as he does on other occasions. The apparent acceptance of this Semitism into Greek supports the contention that the formation of indirect speech acts is not entirely language specific, the syntax being understood across language boundaries. Robertson remarked that his construction is “not un-Greek in itself.”<sup>40</sup> Other examples of this construction are OT quotations (e.g., Heb 3:11, 4:3, 4:5).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>K. Sorensen (“Asseverative *IF* and its Congeners,” *English Studies* 59 [1978] 248) remarks that these conditionals “are assertions that operate under cover of logic.”

<sup>40</sup>Robertson, *Grammar*, 1024.

<sup>41</sup>A milder form of assertion employs a concession or contraexpectation relation between the two propositions (perhaps they could be called acts of maintaining). The speaker states a contrary thesis and then maintains his position in spite of it. Even though this relation may be conveyed by a first class form (using εἰ, εἰ καί, or εἰπερ), the subordinate clause does not stipulate a condition (e.g., “Although all will be offended in you, I will never be offended” [Matt 26:33]). Burton (*Moods and Tenses*, 112) argues that such sentences should not be regarded as conditionals, saying “The force of a concessive sentence is thus very different from that of a conditional sentence. The latter represents the fulfilment of the apodosis as conditioned on the fulfilment of the protasis; the former represents the apodosis as fulfilled in spite of the fulfilment of the protasis.” J. H. Greenlee (“IF in the New Testament,” *TBT* 13 [1962] 42–43) agrees, saying, “Whereas a conditional clause sets up a condition favorable to the occurrence of an event, a clause of concession sets up a condition which is affirmed to be inadequate to bring about the event.” Nelson Goodman (*Fact, Fiction, & Forecast* [Cambridge: Harvard University, 1955] 15) argues that semifactuals (“even if” clauses) do not assert a causal connection between the antecedent and consequent; rather they deny that such a relation exists. The idea of connection is a basic element in real conditions. J. Haiman (“Conditionals are Topics,” *Language* 54 [1978] 579) observes that some logicians and linguists “deny that semifactuals are conditionals at all—regardless of their superficial morphological similarity to true conditionals.” The question, however, is really one of definition. Haiman (564) remarks, “Until a satisfactory definition for a category exists, the sole criterion for identification of its supposed



### Manipulate

A speaker may use a conditional to manipulate the listener. A manipulation is an attempt to get someone to do something that he normally would not do or thinks is wrong (e.g., "If you won't be a good boy, Santa won't come"). The necessary conditions for the performance of a manipulation are that the hearer perform a future act (propositional condition), the hearer is able to do the act, but it is not obvious to the speaker that the hearer is willing to perform the act (preparatory condition), the speaker wants the hearer to perform the act (sincerity condition), and the speaker counts his utterance as an attempt to force the hearer to perform the act (essential condition). Indirect manipulations may be performed by questioning the hearer's ability to do an act ("You cannot do . . .") or by questioning the hearer's character ("If you're a man, you would . . .").

An example of a conditional used for manipulation is found in Matt 4:3: Εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰπὲ ἵνα οἱ λίθοι οὗτοι ἄρτοι γένωνται / 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread'. If a command is found in the consequent, then the truth value of the antecedent is dependent upon the response. If Jesus obeyed, making the consequent true, nothing could be said regarding the truth value of the antecedent. If, however, he did not obey, making the consequent false, then by *modus tollens* the antecedent is also false—a denial of his own deity. To escape Satan's trap, Jesus responded by saying that obedience is due God rather than to his tempter. Satan is not merely assuming the premise to be true, he is using Jesus' character as a leverage to force him to do something.<sup>42</sup> Other examples of manipulation are found in John 19:12 and Phlm 17.

### Exhort

An exhortation is an attempt to urge a hearer to do something he recognizes is proper. It differs from a manipulation in the preparatory and necessary conditions; it is not obvious to the speaker that the hearer would do the act without being encouraged, and it counts as an attempt to urge the hearer to perform the act. Exhortations

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members is common superficial form: in the case of conditional clauses, the presence, in English, of a common conjunction *if*; in other languages, of a corresponding conjunction, word-order, verbal desinence, or whatever." Exegetical precision calls for a definition of conditionals based on the logical relations between propositions and on the speaker's usage, rather than solely on form.

<sup>42</sup>It is obvious that Satan was attempting to force Jesus to do something that he would never otherwise do (obey him rather than the Father). As such it is classified as a manipulation rather than an exhortation. However, the question remains whether εἰ

may be strengthened by stating the reason the act should be done. Among the ways a causal relation can be formed in Greek is by using the conjunction εἰ. Such usage should not be considered conditional.

An example of an exhortation is found in 1 John 4:11: Ἀγαπῆται, εἰ οὕτως ὁ θεὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν / 'Beloved, since God so loved us, we also should love one another'. Exhortations are also found in John 13:14 and Col 3:1. The matrix clause may contain an imperative, a statement using "ought," or a rhetorical question which can be interpreted as an imperative (e.g., Luke 12:26).

### *Mock*

Sometimes a person will boast about being correct and mock or deride another for being wrong. This ridicule is made even more pointed when it is constructed in the form of a conditional sentence. The conditions necessary for the performance of a mockery are that the hearer has performed a past act or made a proposition (propositional condition), the hearer believes the act was right or the proposition true (preparatory condition), but the speaker believes the act was wrong or the proposition false (sincerity condition), and the speaker counts his utterance as an attempt to ridicule the hearer (necessary condition).

An example of mockery is found in Matt 27:40: Εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ, κατὰβηθι ἀπο τοῦ σταυροῦ / 'If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross'. The scorers were certainly not trying to manipulate Jesus to come down from the cross (they did not believe that he could). Instead, they were deriding Jesus for his "false assessment" of who he was and asserting that they were right all along—the fact that he was hanging helpless on the cross proves for them that they were correct; he cannot be the Son of God. For other examples of mockery see Matt 27:43; Luke 23:35, 37.

### CONCLUSION

Speech act theory has called attention to the function of an utterance in human communication and to the necessity of considering both the propositional meaning and speaker's intent when interpreting what any given communication means.<sup>43</sup> The speaker's intent

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should be rendered "since" or "if". "Since" would indicate that Satan is manipulating by flattery; "if" would indicate that Satan is manipulating by *modus tollens*. Both types of manipulation are performed by questioning the hearer's character or ability. The hearer is being forced to comply in order to vindicate his reputation. The latter, however, is much more forceful and is, therefore, probably the force Satan intended.

<sup>43</sup>Speech act theory lends substantial weight to Hirsch's contention that the text is not autonomous from the speaker's intent (E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation*

can be detected from surface structure markings or by the interaction of the surface structure and situational context. This latter observation forces the exegete to integrate the total context (situational as well as linguistic) into his grammatical and lexical analysis at all levels.

Analyzing conditionals in light of speech act theory can be a useful tool to bring the exegete nearer to the intended meaning of the speaker/author and to resolve exegetical problems. The analysis of conditionals in light of mood, tense, and particles is not wrong, but it only examines part of what contributes to meaning. Viewing a problem from different angles usually results in a clearer understanding. It is like taking pictures of different sides of a building. A picture of the front of the building may be an accurate representation, but it cannot provide the viewer with an understanding of the whole (How long is the building? Is there a back porch?). Analyzing conditionals in light of speech act theory simply takes another picture of the problem from a different angle, augmenting the understanding based on traditional grammar.

One purpose of this paper has been to question the prevailing assumption that the linguistic form of a conditional sentence (i.e., tense, mood, and particles) is the sole criteria to ascertain meaning. This has been the approach of most previous work on conditionals. Perhaps the reason for the prevalence of this assumption is that Greek studies have traditionally been confined to linguistic features. Those who have passed through traditional instruction, therefore, have a tendency to equate propositional meaning with total meaning.

Further studies could be made in several areas. First, more precise categories and criteria will enhance the accuracy of the results and eliminate some subjectivity. For example, what determines that an utterance fits the criteria for a certain illocutionary act when exactly the same words are said (as in the case of Mary and Martha in John 11:21, 32)? To say that Martha's utterance was a rebuke and that Mary's was a lament when they say exactly the same thing must rest entirely on the exegete's analysis of the total context, including the actions of the speakers and hearers when the utterances were made. For example, a rebuke is rarely given when a person is bowing down before another and weeping (as Mary was). Mary's posture reflects her being deeply grieved rather than resentful and angry.

The various aspects of the total context must be evaluated in terms of how they influence the necessary conditions for a particular speech act (the propositional, preparatory, sincerity, and essential conditions). A rebuke and lament differ mainly in the sincerity and

essential conditions. The reason their indirect forms can be expressed with identical surface structure phenomena is because the propositional (a past act of the hearer or a past event) and preparatory (the speaker believes the past act or event was not in his best interest) conditions are very similar. The sincerity condition reflects an inner disposition or emotion which often surfaces in observable actions. These actions, for the most part, are not consciously performed, yet they do convey a certain emotional state. The sincerity condition for a rebuke (the speaker is angered because of an act) might be revealed by voice inflection and increased volume, rapidity of speech, short choppy phrases, or tension and rigidity of body. The sincerity condition for a lament (the speaker feels grieved because of an event) could be discerned from weeping, solitude, bowing the head, or a quiet, broken voice. None of the behavior patterns for a lament were observed in connection with Martha's utterance, but two accompanied Mary's. It is only on such a basis that a difference in meaning can be determined when the propositional content is identical.

The essential condition reflects an attempt to communicate a certain disposition or intent. The behavior patterns associated with the essential condition, therefore, are more deliberate than those associated with the sincerity condition. Circumstances accompanying a rebuke might include the speaker being in close proximity to the hearer, the speaker leaning forward, a characteristic facial expression, or short quick gestures with the lower arm and hand. A rebuke is more confrontational than a lament. Actions in the ancient Jewish culture that help to convey a lament include beating the breast, rending one's garments, lifting one's hands, fasting, dressing in black garments, going barefoot, removing ornaments from one's attire, sitting among ashes or sprinkling ashes on oneself, or public wailing. The expression of a rebuke involves retaliative behavior against an offender instead of outbursts of undirected energy, as with a lament. Martha's meeting with Jesus was more confrontational, thereby suggesting that she was rebuking him.

The above represents suggestions for integrating the situational context with the propositional content to arrive at the speaker's meaning. All of the behavior patterns mentioned, whether consciously or unconsciously performed, are modes of communication. Since they contribute to the total meaning, they cannot be ignored by the exegete. Of course, some behavior patterns cannot be discerned from a literary text, but many can, especially in the Scriptures. The Hebrew people were honest with their feelings and when something displeased them, they would not hesitate to lift their voice to God and cry out, "Why have you allowed this to happen?" Such outbursts were not disrespectful, as might be construed in a more reserved culture.

A second area of further research lies in applying speech act theory to other categories of language study. For example, a rhetorical question is an indirect speech act that can be formed when a speaker questions the truth of a proposition. The preparatory condition for an assertion is that the speaker has evidence for the truth of a proposition. By questioning the truth of a proposition, a speaker is actually making a strong negative assertion. Thus, the rhetorical question, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36), is actually a negative assertion, "It will surely not profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul."

A third area of further research concerns the implications of speech act theory for translation work. Speech act theory indicates that the illocutionary force of a sentence must be retained if a sentence is to be understood. For instance, explicit performatives in a source language may be best rendered implicitly in a receptor language. For example, Luke 14:18*b* reads, ἐρωτῶ σε, ἔχε με παρητημένον. The *NIV* translation, "Please excuse me," accurately renders the illocutionary force of the sentence without explicitly translating every lexical item from the source language.

Traditional grammar does not adequately explain the meaning of certain passages of Scripture. This article has demonstrated that speech act theory can lead to a better understanding of the biblical text.



# THE DEVELOPMENT OF GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AND THE DIVISION OF THE BRETHREN CHURCH

RONALD T. CLUTTER

*Grace Theological Seminary came into existence after years of turmoil at Ashland College and Theological Seminary which resulted in the dismissal from that institution of its dean, Alva J. McClain, and of Professor Herman A. Hoyt. As some Brethren Church congregations and leaders rallied in support of these men, a new seminary was established. Opening its doors in 1937 in temporary headquarters at Akron, Ohio, Grace encountered a variety of hurdles but prospered in its first two years.*

*As Grace Seminary drew students and financial support away from Ashland and as it emphasized some doctrines not a part of the Brethren heritage, conflict developed within the Brethren Church. In 1939, after two years of internal strife, the Brethren Church divided into two conferences—one identified with Grace and the other with Ashland. That year also witnessed the relocation of Grace Seminary to Winona Lake, Indiana, where it has served its constituency for fifty years.*

\* \* \*

## INTRODUCTION

FROM 1931 until 1937 Ashland Theological Seminary served the Brethren Church as a graduate institution with the purpose of training men and women for Christian service. From the beginning of its existence on the Ashland College campus, the seminary was involved in conflict.<sup>1</sup> The trouble rose to a fever pitch in 1937. On June 1 Alva J. McClain and Herman A. Hoyt were dismissed from their positions in the seminary which McClain had founded and led.

<sup>1</sup>See Ronald T. Clutter, "A Background History of Grace Theological Seminary," *Grace Theological Journal* 9:2 (Fall 1988) 205-32.



## THE BRETHREN BIBLICAL SEMINARY ASSOCIATION

Grace Theological Seminary was conceived at a prayer meeting in Ashland, Ohio, on June 2, 1937. Gathered at the home of J. C. Beal were men concerned about the dismissal of professors McClain and Hoyt. In the company of the fired teachers at the prayer meeting were Ashland Seminary professor Melvin A. Stuckey, some seminary students and Brethren pastors. Kenneth B. Ashman, one of the students in attendance, shared the background for the gathering.

On the morning after a memorable board meeting in the Spring of 1937, we questioned as many students of Ashland Seminary as possible. With but two exceptions they stated their intentions of attending some theological school, aside from Ashland, the following Fall. "I'll go to Moody." "I'll go back to B.I." "Let's go to Dallas." These expressed intentions were personal, uninfluenced, but determined. They agreed in thought that if, as Brethren students, we were to be deprived of the best theological training in our denomination, we would seek the second best elsewhere.

By evening our attitude was generally known to the college and seminary officary alike. Within a certain group of Brethren there arose the fear that to have these ministerial recruits scattered to numerous schools would be to invite their loss to the Brethren Church. Accordingly, they gathered to discuss the problem at hand. During this gathering, *at the request of the students*, the germ of a new seminary, "the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association," was formed.<sup>2</sup>

McClain reported that there was agreement in the Beal home that steps needed to be taken "for the perpetuation of the ideals and faith of the seminary which had been founded 7 years before, and also to care for the students who were already saying they could never return to the Ashland campus."<sup>3</sup> A time of prayer concluded with pastor Louis S. Bauman writing a personal check and declaring that he wished to make the first donation to the new seminary.<sup>4</sup>

### *Association Leadership*

A document was circulated affording participants the opportunity to express their support for a new theological seminary for the Brethren Church. All present signed the paper except for Stuckey

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth B. Ashman, "Grace Students," *The Brethren Evangelist* 61:9 (4 March 1939) 17.

<sup>3</sup>Alva J. McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," in *Charis: The History of Grace Theological Seminary, 1931-1951*, ed. John Whitcomb (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1951) 29.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 30.

who wished first to ascertain his status at Ashland Seminary.<sup>5</sup> The immediate product of this support was the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association. A. V. Kimmel, pastor of the First Brethren Church of Philadelphia, was chosen to be association president. Pastor Russell D. Barnard of the First Brethren Church of Dayton, Ohio, was selected vice-president. Hoyt initially was named secretary but on the day following his appointment he resigned and was replaced by Raymond E. Gingrich, pastor at the First Brethren Church of Akron, Ohio. Henry V. Wall, a layman from Long Beach, California, was selected to be the treasurer.<sup>6</sup> An advisory council of thirty men was established "to guide the destinies of the new project until such time as a regular board of trustees should be elected."<sup>7</sup>

On July 28-29 the executive committee of the new association met with some advisory council members in the First Brethren Church of Philadelphia. To be determined were the name, site and faculty for the proposed seminary.<sup>8</sup> The decision was made to call the school Grace Theological Seminary.<sup>9</sup> Out of the invitations to house the new Brethren seminary, that of the First Brethren Church of Akron, sometimes known as Ellet Brethren Church, was chosen. McClain was invited to preside over the school while Hoyt and Homer A. Kent, Sr., were selected to serve with him as faculty members. McClain accepted the task of preparing "a prospectus covering the general seminary plans together with an outline of curriculum suitable for public distribution."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. Stuckey remained at Ashland until 1951. He was appointed dean of the seminary in 1943. See "Stuckey, Melvin Atwood," *The Brethren Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: The Brethren Encyclopedia, Inc., 1983) 2:1229 and Arthur Petit, "Ashland College News Letter," *The Brethren Evangelist* 65:35 (4 September 1943) 11.

<sup>6</sup>Other charter members were Charles H. Ashman, Sr., Charles W. Mayes, Homer A. Kent, Sr., Kenneth B. Ashman, Louis A. Bauman, Robert Williams, Arnold Kriegbaum, William H. Schaffer, J. C. Beal, R. Paul Miller, Alva J. McClain, Herman W. Koontz, John M. Aeby and Thomas E. Hammers. Note the significance of some of these men in the Brethren Church. Bauman arguably was the most well-known of the pastors in the denomination, serving the largest of its churches, and functioning as secretary of the Foreign Missionary Society. Beal was business manager of the Brethren Publishing Company and Mayes served as editor of *The Brethren Evangelist*. R. Paul Miller was secretary of the Missionary Board of the Brethren Church giving direction to the home missions ministry. McClain was the best-known theologian of the Brethren Church.

<sup>7</sup>Homer A. Kent, Sr., *Conquering Frontiers* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1972) 154.

<sup>8</sup>For a report of major business transacted see "New Seminary Executive Committee Has Meeting," *The Brethren Evangelist* 59:32 (14 August 1937) 10.

<sup>9</sup>Hoyt recalled that there was another institution being formed in Philadelphia that summer, Faith Theological Seminary, whose founders had considered using the title "Grace." Interview with Herman A. Hoyt, 17 April 1986.

<sup>10</sup>"New Seminary Executive Committee Has Meeting," p. 10.

*Association Activity*

Financing Grace Theological Seminary was a major obstacle in the path of the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association. Kimmel was authorized to formulate a letter with the purpose of raising funds. Assistance was needed from the Brethren churches, some of which had prepared in advance for the solicitation of finances. The prestigious First Brethren Church of Long Beach, California, with Louis S. Bauman as pastor, on June 22 declared withdrawal of support from Ashland College and Seminary. The church resolved that it "shall give hearty and undivided support to any seminary which shall recognize the spiritual and legal control of the National Conference of the Brethren Church, or the control of some other conferences or organizations approved by The National Conference of the Brethren Churches of the United States; and that if the movement known as the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association shall be approved, then this church places itself squarely behind said Association."<sup>11</sup> Following this lead, the Southern California District Conference of Brethren Churches stated that it "most heartily endorses the action of the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association and pledges its support through prayer and moral influence" and requested that its congregations "support the new Seminary prayerfully, morally, and in a financial way as deemed best by its membership."<sup>12</sup>

The publicity for Grace Seminary emphasized Brethren control which some pastors thought had been lost at Ashland. Significant changes had been made at the Ashland College trustee meeting in the spring of 1936. Dennis Martin summarized the issues.

. . . Charles Anspach reminded the Board that Ashland College had been established as a liberal arts college with the training of ministers as only one of its functions. The college was to be held in trust for the Brethren Church by the Board of Trustees and if the Brethren Church wished to change policies it must do so through the Board of Trustees. But the denomination must also be prepared to assume a greater share of the financial burden. Without waiting for a response from the Brethren Church, he proceeded to propose changes in the composition and election of the Board of Trustees. The Board would be increased from thirty-six to forty-two members with all six additional members representing non-Brethren interests (the Ashland community, alumni, and two members-at-large appointed by the Board itself).

But by far the most far-reaching change concerned the selection of the trustees. Until 1927 thirty-three trustees had been nominated by the district conferences and elected by the Board. In that year the Board

<sup>11</sup>"First Brethren Church of Long Beach, Calif.," *The Brethren Evangelist* 59:32 (14 August 1937) 10.

<sup>12</sup>"Report of the 27th Annual District and Bible Conference of Southern California," *The Brethren Evangelist* 59:35 (11 September 1937) 17.

amended the procedure to permit direct election by the district conferences. Anspach now pointed out that this procedure was contrary to the college charter and proposed a new constitution which would firmly anchor the pre-1927 procedure. The Board would now elect its new membership from district nominations and become self-perpetuating. To many church members who had contributed to the endowment campaigns the realization that the Brethren Church had "lost" all effective control over the college was a rude shock.<sup>13</sup>

In response to the thinking of those so shocked, the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association declared as its purpose the sponsorship of "a theological seminary which shall be both Biblical and Brethren in faith, practice, ownership and control."<sup>14</sup> Stoffer concluded:

It was the original intention of this association to present the plans for the new institution to the 1937 General Conference for approval, but this course of action failed to materialize. Apparently, the association was fearful that their plans would be rejected by Conference, so they organized the Seminary outside the structure of Conference, following the model used in the creation of the Foreign Missionary Board.<sup>15</sup>

Patterned after the model of the Foreign Missionary Board, the board of Grace Seminary would not be self-perpetuating but would be composed of those persons elected by "a body of corporation members composed of those who give to its financial support and are in agreement with its purposes."<sup>16</sup>

#### EARLY PROGRESS OF GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The newly created seminary opened on October 4, 1937, with classes beginning on the following day.

As the faculty and students assembled for the first chapel service, by common consent the song chosen to express our recognition of what God hath wrought, also as a united testimony as to the source of all future blessing expected by faith, was:

*"Marvelous Grace of our loving Lord,  
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,*

<sup>13</sup>Dennis Martin, "Ashland College Versus Ashland Seminary (1921-37): Prelude to Schism," *Brethren Life and Thought* 21 (Winter 1976):45-46.

<sup>14</sup>The Brethren Biblical Seminary Association, *Why a New Seminary* (n.p., n.d.) 3.

<sup>15</sup>Dale R. Stoffer, "The Background and Development of Thought and Practice in the German Baptist Brethren (Dunker) and the Brethren (Progressive) Churches (c. 1650-1979)," Th.D. dissertation, Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1980, p. 709n. This work is being published by the Brethren Encyclopedia Incorporated as *History and Background of Brethren Doctrines*.

<sup>16</sup>McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," p. 33.

*Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,  
There where the Blood of the Lamb was spilt.*

\* \* \*

*Marvelous Grace, Infinite Grace,  
Grace that is greater than all our sin.*<sup>17</sup>

### *Student Enrollment*

Eighteen of the twenty Ashland Seminary students remaining after the 1937 commencement withdrew from that institution to follow their instructors, McClain and Hoyt, to Grace. Hoyt wrote:

And out of the 18 came 11 who formed the solid nucleus for the new student body, along with one other graduate who returned for further work. Kenneth Ashman, John Aeby, Harold Etling, Mrs. Ada Etling, Albert Flory, Luther Grubb, Edward Hay, Hill Maconaghy, Arthur Malles, Robert Miller, John Squires, and Russell Williams were pioneers in Grace Seminary. They were joined on registration day by six preseminary students who had formerly attended Ashland College: Wayne Baker, Edward Bowman, Harold Dunning, Mrs. Marguerite Dunning, Arnold Kriegbaum, and Blaine Snyder.<sup>18</sup>

Joining these eighteen were twenty-one more men and women pursuing seminary education. Three of these students, Raymond E. Gingrich, Professor Hoyt and Cloyce Pugh entered the graduate program. The names of the rest of the students are Ralph Carmany, Mrs. Margaret Emmons, Mrs. Edith Gingrich, Donald Hare, Earl Miller, Ernest Myers, Estella Myers, Vernon Newton, Henry Rempel, Edna Silkett, Ethel Morrill, Ruth Snyder, Charles Thomas, Ethel Thompson, Robert Williams, Mrs. Lenora Williams, Mrs. Margaret Williams and Herbert Wolfe.<sup>19</sup> Twenty-nine of the students were members of the Brethren Church, eight being pastors. Ten students were either assigned to, or in preparation for, foreign service. Estella Myers, who had gone as a missionary to Africa in 1918, came to Grace Seminary to learn Greek in order to be enabled to translate the New Testament for Africans. Ruth Snyder recalled: "She about wore us all out, including the teacher, because she was so persistent. She had to learn it and learn it she did."<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Ashman served as president of the

<sup>17</sup>*Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 1:1 (October 1937) 2.

<sup>18</sup>Herman A. Hoyt, "The Academic History of Grace Theological Seminary," in *Charis: The History of Grace Theological Seminary, 1931-1951*, ed. John Whitcomb (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1951) 43.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>20</sup>Interview with Ruth Snyder, 18 December 1986. For the life of Estella Myers, read Ruth Snyder, *Estella Myers: Pioneer Missionary in Central Africa* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1984).

first student body consisting of men and women from the states of California, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Washington.<sup>21</sup>

### *Leadership, Purpose and Goals*

The faculty consisted of four men. McClain was president and taught theology and apologetics. Hoyt offered instruction in biblical languages and exegesis. Kent served as pastor of the First Brethren Church of Washington, D.C. and visited the seminary to teach Old Testament and archaeology. Pastor Gingrich was a graduate student who also taught courses in church history and missions. Courses in homiletics, practical theology and English Bible were divided among the faculty. Supervising the school was a board of trustees composed of twenty-seven men, more than half of whom had studied at Ashland.<sup>22</sup>

The purpose of the seminary was stated: "To know Christ and make Him known as the Only Savior and Lord of Life."<sup>23</sup> Seven goals were listed:

1. A Bible-Centered Curriculum
2. A Competent and Believing Scholarship
3. A Spiritual and Prayer-Charged Environment
4. A Missionary and Evangelistic Spirit
5. A Premillennial Hope and Viewpoint
6. A Spirit-Filled and Separated Life
7. An Expository Preaching and Teaching Ministry<sup>24</sup>

### *Financial Affairs and Incorporation*

Though finances were to be a continued concern, the seminary opened without any tuition fees. Financial support was expected to come from those interested in the student produced at Grace. The first large financial contribution, a gift of one thousand dollars was tendered by missionary-student Estella Myers.<sup>25</sup> Rather than place the emphasis on finances, the seminary leadership emphasized prayer.

... there is one thing without which we cannot exist and accomplish our ministry: that is the Intercession of the Lord's people. Our first need is prayer. We believe that if prayer is made "without ceasing," all the financial needs of Grace Seminary from month to month will be

<sup>21</sup> *Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 1:1 (October 1937) 2.

<sup>22</sup> McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," p. 32.

<sup>23</sup> *Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 1:1 (October 1937) 4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.



met fully by gifts released by the will of the Holy Spirit. The foundation of this school was laid in prayer, as those who participated will remember, and we feel it must continue in prayer.<sup>26</sup>

A student quartet was formed which carried the message of Grace extensively throughout the Brethren Church. The group consisted of Kenneth Ashman, Albert Flory, Arnold Kriegbaum and Henry Rempel. A December-January tour of the east covered 1900 miles with services in ten churches and an attendance of 1685. The services consisted of singing and testimonies with no sermons. A "goodly sum of cash and pledges" came to the school through this ministry. An eastern tour was planned for midwestern churches.<sup>27</sup> The popularity of the quartet was such that many invitations had to be turned down. Ashman, Flory and Kriegbaum were pastors, also. Rempel was director of music in his church.

Articles of incorporation under the laws of the state of Ohio were filed on April 13, 1938. With this action a new corporation, Grace Theological Seminary, replaced the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association. Most of the officers of the association became officers of the seminary. Membership in the corporation was extended to persons who contributed annually to the support of Grace. A "Covenant of Faith" was written into the charter and included the provision that this covenant could not be changed and must be signed annually by trustees and faculty in order to qualify for their positions.<sup>28</sup> The first meeting of the corporation took place on September 1, 1938, in Winona Lake, Indiana. Following this gathering, newly elected trustees convened "for the purpose of effecting their organization."<sup>29</sup>

### *Completion of Inaugural Year*

Less than two months after incorporation, Grace Theological Seminary held its first commencement activities. The class graduated on June 3 consisted of Kenneth B. Ashman, Robert E. Miller and Russell L. Williams. The services focused upon the graduates and their families.

The Baccalaureate Sermon was preached by Rev. R. Paul Miller, father of Robert Miller; and the Graduation Address was delivered by Rev. Charles H. Ashman,<sup>30</sup> father of Kenneth Ashman. At the close of

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>"Grace Quartet," *The Brethren Evangelist* 60:8 (19 February 1938) 19.

<sup>28</sup>*Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 2:1 (1 November 1938) 2.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>This address, "The Minister's Message for Today," was printed in the 25 June 1938 issue of *The Brethren Evangelist*.



the graduation service, the three graduates were ordained to the Christian ministry in an impressive ceremony conducted by the two fathers and Rev. Robert Williams, brother of Russell Williams.<sup>31</sup>

Grace Seminary completed its initial year with all bills paid. Throughout that year various occurrences convinced faculty and students of God's favor upon their school. A primary necessity of a graduate school is a library. The first *Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* contained this report:

A library is being sent from California. Other needed books have been loaned by students, pastors, and faculty members. In this connection we received recently a remarkable answer to prayer. There were certain technical and expensive books which were absolutely essential, especially in the field of biblical languages. Two members of the faculty drove to Grand Rapids, Michigan, to examine the stock of several stores which cater to seminary needs. After spending considerable time, we were able to secure quite a number of the needed books from the second hand department. The bill ran into three figures, but we purchased them by faith, believing that since the books were needed God would provide the money. When we returned to Akron we found waiting two checks, one from New Jersey and the other from Kansas, which came within 63 cents of meeting the bill, and both gifts were designated for the purchase of books. This was an encouragement to our faith.<sup>32</sup>

Hill Maconaghy, in commenting on the small size of the room containing the library, said: "When several of us got into the library, the others had to wait until we got out."<sup>33</sup> Hoyt recalled that a table with chairs placed on both sides made the situation such that "it was impossible to get back and forth." He had heard that students crawled along the top of the table to get needed books.<sup>34</sup>

Having begun their training in the midst of difficult financial times, many Grace Seminary students found themselves in need. A significant number had left jobs in Ashland when they made the move to Grace. Some students were able to find part-time employment, some were dependent upon working wives. McClain wrote:

Among the students there has grown up a very beautiful spirit of fellowship and thoughtfulness on behalf of others. When more than once this year it became known that some student was in real need, the others quietly arranged a little "surprise" gathering in which they

<sup>31</sup>*Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 2:1 (1 November 1938) 2.

<sup>32</sup>*Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 1:1 (October 1937) 3.

<sup>33</sup>Interview with Hill Maconaghy, 22 September 1986.

<sup>34</sup>Hoyt interview.

shared their own possessions of food and money with the ones in need, thus making it possible for them to continue their studies in the Seminary.<sup>35</sup>

Maconaghy recalled these occasions when faculty and students participated together in helping needy students and how those benefited were encouraged by these expressions of Christian love. He also spoke of opportunities students took to pool their resources in order to enjoy a special meal together.<sup>36</sup>

### *The Second Year*

The registration for the first semester of the second year of the seminary was on September 19, 1938, with classes beginning on the following day. Forty-seven students registered but two withdrew due to financial needs. Twenty-one of the students were from the Brethren Church. Twenty students were pastors, nine in the Brethren Church. Eight of the Brethren students were preparing for foreign missionary service.<sup>37</sup> Three new faculty members were welcomed to the seminary family on a part-time basis. Tom Hammers, a Cleveland pastor, taught classes in homiletics and practical theology while J. C. Beal and Everett Niswonger offered courses in English Bible. The graduation in the spring of 1939 witnessed some firsts. Hoyt and Pugh were the first graduates to receive the degree of Master of Theology. Mrs. Harold Etling was the first woman to receive a degree, that of Bachelor of Divinity.

### PROBLEMS WITHIN THE BRETHREN CHURCH

While the year was a successful one for the seminary it was a difficult one for the Brethren Church. The existence of Grace Seminary brought to the fore issues that had existed in the denominational membership for a number of years but now were brought to a boil. Loyalty to the Brethren Church on the part of the supporters of Grace was questioned by members supporting Ashland. In turn, the Grace faction questioned the theological integrity of some at Ashland and the Grace group, with its dispensational and somewhat Calvinistic theological system, entered into conflict with the traditional Brethren approaches to the significance and application of the Sermon on the Mount, the doctrines of election and eternal security as well as the place of works in the plan of salvation. The dissension had risen to an explosive level. Stoffer wrote:

<sup>35</sup> *Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 1:3 (April 1938) 2.

<sup>36</sup> Maconaghy interview.

<sup>37</sup> *Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 2:1 (1 November 1938).

... by the end of 1938 both groups were organized for the inevitable showdown. Each had developed a powerful apologetic and was using it to its full potential. The Ashland group was the preserver of historic Brethrenism while the Grace group was the defender of the fundamentals of the faith against all tendencies toward liberalism and modernism.<sup>38</sup>

Though the existence of Grace Seminary did not of itself cause the separation of the two bodies into separate conferences, Stoffer concluded that the founding of the new Brethren school began the process of division.<sup>39</sup> That the two factions were identified as Ashland and Grace groups demonstrates the importance of the seminary issue.

### *Home Missions Unrest*

One step which accelerated the polarization was the action by the Missionary Board of the Brethren Church in dismissing R. Paul Miller as field secretary, from which position he had given direction to the home missions work. Miller was removed from office during the board meeting at the National Conference in 1937 but it was requested by the vote of the Conference that he be reinstated. At the 1938 meeting Miller again was dismissed by the board, a decision not overridden by the conference. The board action infuriated the Grace group which assumed that Miller had been dismissed due to his support of Grace Seminary. Stoffer identified part of the problem: "Especially galling to the Board was Miller's placement of Grace-oriented pastors in the mission churches in spite of the fact that two-thirds of the Board represented the Ashland faction."<sup>40</sup> A new organization, the National Home Mission Council, was created by Brethren identified with Grace. Miller became the director of the council. The Brethren now had two seminaries and two home missions organizations.

### *Loyalty Issue*

The District Conference of the Brethren Churches of Indiana convened on June 13, 1939. A credentials struggle followed which resulted in the following resolution:

Therefore, be it resolved by the District Conference of Indiana Brethren Churches assembled at the Brethren Retreat at Shipshewana, Indiana, this 14th day of June, 1939, that we declare our protest and

<sup>38</sup>Stoffer, "Background and Development of Thought," p. 716.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 717.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 715. Cf. Dennis Martin, "What Has Divided the Brethren Church," *Brethren life and Thought* 21 (Spring 1976) 110-11.

challenge the right of any church to representation in any district conference or at our national conference to be held at Winona Lake, Indiana, Aug. 28 to Sept. 3, 1939, if they have taken any action separating themselves from the established boards or institutions of The Brethren Church, since their vote would be obstructive and divisive.<sup>41</sup>

The 1939 General Conference of the Brethren Church meeting in Winona Lake witnessed the events which resulted in the division of the brotherhood into two conferences. With the credential committee dominated by Ashland supporters, the credentials of about one hundred lay and ministerial delegates from the Grace party were rejected.<sup>42</sup> Stoffer wrote: "In spite of the objections by Grace partisans that this action was a violation of congregational rights, the maneuver realized its goal—the control of the Conference organization."<sup>43</sup>

### *A New Conference*

With no other recourse, the Grace group gathered to organize the National Brethren Bible Conference. The *Brethren Evangelist*, edited by Charles W. Mayes, one of the Grace party leaders, reported concerning the new body:

This was *not* another General Conference. It was *not* a delegated body. It is *not* to be an organization outside The Brethren Church. It is a Bible conference within The Brethren Church. Next year any Brethren church may send delegates to the General Conference [sic], which, according to some reports, may be held at Shipshewana Lake, Indiana. The National Brethren Bible Conference will be held at Winona Lake, Indiana, the last week in August. We trust that friendly relationships may exist between these two groups within The Brethren Church and that the work may be carried on separately with the two groups until such time as they may agree to work harmoniously.<sup>44</sup>

The greatness of the differences, the importance of the issues to both factions and the steadfastness of the leaders of the two groups would not allow harmony to exist and the National Brethren Bible Conference became the National Fellowship of Brethren Churches in 1940.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup>L. V. King, "Indiana Conference Business Sessions," *The Brethren Evangelist* 61:28 (15 July 1939) 11.

<sup>42</sup>"The Editor's Box," *The Brethren Evangelist* 61:35 (9 September 1938) 3. Cf. other editorial comments, protests and statements on pages 4–7.

<sup>43</sup>Stoffer, "Background and Development of Thought," p. 718.

<sup>44</sup>"The Editor's Box," *The Brethren Evangelist* 61:35 (9 September 1938) 4.

<sup>45</sup>For a thorough discussion and evaluation of issues, see Stoffer, "Background and Development of Thought," pp. 720–39.

## GRACE SEMINARY RELOCATION

Amid the time of turmoil within the denomination, important decisions about the future were being made at Grace Seminary. The location at the Akron church was meant to be temporary. During the first two years of the ministry of Grace, a permanent location was a primary concern. Several options became available. McClain made reference to a "formal invitation from the First Brethren Church of Long Beach, Calif., offering to house the school in the building originally contemplated when the school was founded in 1930."<sup>46</sup> Hoyt stated that Des Moines, Iowa, was considered also.<sup>47</sup> An invitation was extended by W. E. Biederwolf for Grace Seminary to relocate in Winona Lake. Biederwolf, well-known evangelist and president of the Winona Lake School of Theology, a summer school, was familiar with the theological position of Grace and desirous of having the seminary move to his town. McClain commented:

... many of the Brethren pastors and leaders felt that a central location would more easily serve the educational needs of the Brethren who had been meeting at Winona Lake in annual conferences for over half a century. It also appeared that a school of this character was needed in northern Indiana and the surrounding territory, since from its beginning Grace Seminary attracted students from many conservative Christian groups outside the Brethren Church.<sup>48</sup>

Hoyt added that the invitation to Winona Lake included the privilege of sharing the library of the Winona Lake School of Theology.<sup>49</sup> Hoyt noted the significance of Winona Lake in the birth of Grace.

The organization of Grace Theological Seminary, though prayed into existence in Ashland, Ohio, and first located in Akron, Ohio, was really consummated in Winona Lake, Indiana. It was here in connection with the General Conference of the Brethren Church that the corporation membership was begun, the first Board of Trustees was elected, the name was settled upon, and the first teachers were called.<sup>50</sup>

The move to Winona Lake did not meet with the immediate approval of the whole seminary family. Students who were serving in pastorates would not be able to maintain these ministries and continue

<sup>46</sup> McClain, p. 33.

<sup>47</sup> Hoyt interview.

<sup>48</sup> McClain, p. 33.

<sup>49</sup> Hoyt, "The Academic History of Grace Theological Seminary," p. 44.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. Note the possible discrepancy concerning the naming of the seminary. Kent places the action in Philadelphia (*Conquering Frontiers*, p. 154) while Hoyt affirms that the name was "settled upon" in Winona Lake. The name may have been chosen in Philadelphia and confirmed in official action at Winona Lake.

training at Grace. Gingrich initially had reservations about relocation because there were many fundamental churches in Akron which benefited from the presence of the seminary. However, neither he nor other Akron pastors were adamant in opposition to the move and Gingrich later acknowledged that the move to Winona Lake, in the long run, was a wise move.<sup>51</sup>

### *The Third Year*

In the fall of 1939, shortly after the bitter dispute in the General Conference which resulted in the division of The Brethren Church, Grace Seminary opened its doors for a third year. The relocation resulted in a significant drop in enrollment due to the inconvenience of moving. Fifteen members of the student body followed the seminary from Akron to Winona Lake.<sup>52</sup> The move from a large city to a small town was a great change for students but proved to be a refreshing one for many. Whereas the students in Akron were spread throughout a large metropolitan area, in Winona Lake they were brought within walking distance of one another and the school. Some inconveniences were suffered due to the nature of the Winona Lake situation. A popular and well-known Bible conference and vacation center, the town swelled in size during the summer months. With the advent of fall, homes were boarded and vacated. Many dwellings were not winterized sufficiently. Some students renting these facilities found physical discomfort during the cold winter months.<sup>53</sup>

### *Seminary Growth*

Twenty-eight students enrolled for the fall of 1939. That number rose to thirty-seven in the fall of 1940. In 1939, Conard Sandy joined the faculty and in 1940, Kent resigned his church to become full-time professor of church history, practical theology and archaeology as well as offer instruction in Old Testament.

## A DIVIDED CHURCH

In 1940 the final step in confirmation of the division in the Brethren Church was realized. The National Brethren Bible Conference became the National Fellowship of Brethren Churches. In January, the *Brethren Missionary Herald* made its appearance as the denominational magazine. Two Grace men, Charles W. Mayes, editor, and J. C. Beal, business manager, had been dismissed from their

<sup>51</sup>Interview with Raymond E. Gingrich, 8 May 1986.

<sup>52</sup>Hoyt, "The Academic History of Grace Theological Seminary," p. 45.

<sup>53</sup>Interview with Ruth Snyder, 18 December 1986.



positions with *The Brethren Evangelist* by the Publication Board during the previous September. The Foreign Missionary Society of the Brethren Church identified itself with the National Fellowship. Stoffer summarized some of the statistical results of division.

In the realignment of churches, the Southern California and Northwest districts went entirely with the Grace Brethren, while Indiana, Illiokota, Midwest and Northern California districts stayed predominantly with the Ashland Brethren. Pennsylvania, Southwest and Ohio districts were nearly evenly divided. The approximately thirty thousand members were nearly equally divided between the two groups while 99 churches went with the Ashland Brethren and 74 with the Grace Brethren.<sup>54</sup>

Stoffer concluded that the division hurt the Ashland group more than the Grace faction. "Those elements that added vitality and zeal to the church—an aggressive home mission program, a successful foreign mission program, nearly all the young ministerial recruits—were inherited by the Grace group."<sup>55</sup>

The prophecy of W. S. Bell concerning the establishment of Grace Seminary proved true: "Two seminaries in a small denomination like ours, whose instructors and students are at variance with each other—MEANS TWO CHURCHES."<sup>56</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Grace Theological Seminary was founded in order to present an alternative within the Brethren Church for seminary education. Convinced of the need for such an institution, significant Brethren leaders led the new institution into growth, development and success in accomplishing the purpose of providing the type of theological education they considered necessary. However, the very existence of Grace Seminary brought to the fore a variety of differences among the Brethren.

Theological issues in which the Grace faction was associated with the Calvinistic training received by McClain included unconditional election and eternal security of believers. The Brethren had not held traditionally to these emphases. The dispensationalism popularized among the Brethren by Louis S. Bauman and McClain tended to ignore the application of the Sermon on the Mount to the church, whereas the Brethren in the previous generations had emphasized

<sup>54</sup>Stoffer, p. 720.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 740.

<sup>56</sup>W. S. Bell, *Who Are the Disturbers of Peace in the Brethren Church?* (Ashland, OH: The Brethren Loyalty Association, n.d.).

obedience to the instruction of Jesus. The stress upon the grace of God by the appropriately named Grace group was thought by the Ashland side to diminish historic Brethrenism which taught the necessity of obedience to the commands of the Lord. At times the term "antinomian" was applied to the Grace side, to which that group responded by identifying the Ashland body as legalistic. Ironically, with regard to social customs, the Grace people viewed Ashlanders as weak in setting standards whereas the Grace group was pictured as expressing fundamentalist and legalistic attitudes.

The tragedy of schism in the church fifty years ago hurt both factions. Division within the denomination brought devastation to churches and bitterness to people who wished to be known by their love for one another. Today both Ashland Theological Seminary and Grace Theological Seminary continue to serve their constituencies, preparing men and women for Christian service in the cause of the one Lord of a divided church.

## REVIEW ARTICLE

### *The Gospel According to Jesus*

HOMER A. KENT

*The Gospel According to Jesus*, by John F. MacArthur, Jr. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988. Pp. 253. \$14.95. Cloth.

The author of *The Gospel According to Jesus* is the pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California, and is nationally known through his daily radio program "Grace to You," and through his writing and Bible conference ministry. He is also the President of The Master's College and Seminary. His dynamic style and clear exposition of Scripture have won for him a national radio following. The forceful and penetrating style of his preaching leaves one in no doubt about where he stands on any issue he discusses, and this characteristic carries over into his writing as well.

MacArthur's topic—What is the gospel?—is a crucial one; therefore, any serious discussion of it is almost certain to create controversy. Ever since those early days in the church at Antioch, Christians have been deeply concerned about exactly what is required in order for a person to be saved (Acts 15:1-2). Because the issue strikes at the very heart of the Christian faith, it is emotionally provocative as well as intellectually challenging.

Since it became known to what was thought to be a very limited group that this reviewer would be writing this article, he has received phone calls, letters, written materials, and many questions, some coming from persons who wanted his opinion without reading the book themselves. At a recent Bible conference when one session was devoted to an open forum where the audience could question the speakers, the first question had to do with MacArthur's book, even though it was not directly related to the theme of the conference.

Inasmuch as most Christians would agree that the gospel has to do with the good news about the Person and the redemptive Work of Jesus Christ which sinners are called upon to believe, perhaps it would help to state the issue this way: What does it mean to *believe* the gospel? Here is where devout Christians begin to differ, and even strongly-Bible-centered believers choose opposite sides and start to label one another. Such descriptions as "Lordship Salvation" and "Easy-Believism" are bandied about, names which seem apt to the users but are usually regarded as inadequate or misleading labels by those to whom they are applied.

MacArthur does not shrink from confrontation. He names persons with whose writings he disagrees. He is careful to acknowledge his admiration and respect for many of these persons, and he does not discount all of their writings by any means, but he does cite clearly those statements in their writings with which he disagrees. To his credit he relegates much of this to footnotes, and always (or almost always) quotes their statements with documentation. His spirit is forthright, but not unkind. It is frank discussion. The most frequent objects of his criticism are Zane Hodges and Charles Ryrie (both former professors at Dallas Theological Seminary), but others are mentioned as well.

In the Preface the author acknowledges the potential objections he will incur. When he insists upon repentance as being involved in saving faith, he expects some to accuse him of teaching salvation by works. He states very clearly that no pre-salvation works of righteousness are necessary to or a part of salvation. "But I do believe without apology that real salvation cannot and will not fail to produce works of righteousness in the life of a true believer" (p. xiii). MacArthur expects to be accused of questioning the salvation of any convert who does not understand Christ's Lordship. He denies this to be his position, but he does state, "I am, however, equally certain that no one can be saved who is either unwilling to obey Christ or consciously rebellious against the lordship of Christ" (p. xiv). He readily recognizes that a newborn Christian does not see all the implications of his faith at the beginning, and certainly could not be expected to enunciate many of these matters in theological language. Nevertheless the fact remains that a Christian has a changed heart and has become a follower of Christ. With such understanding, this reviewer must heartily agree. Anything less is sub-Christian.

An important factor is discussed in the Introduction when the point is made that there is such a thing as false profession of faith. Here and throughout the book, the author stresses the fact that a simple profession of the facts about Christ's death and resurrection might be enough to qualify someone for acceptance into a local church, but that alone is not enough to guarantee that regeneration has occurred. The same circumstance can be found in the apostolic churches as reflected in the New Testament epistles. Numerous warning passages are contained in the New Testament writings, even though all of them to the best of our knowledge were written to Christians. This reviewer has often found this phenomenon to be a point of confusion to beginning students in his classes. How could the warnings be as dire as they seem if the readers were Christians? This is often followed by attempts to dilute the warnings or otherwise explain them away. The point to be remembered is that each New Testament epistle written to a local church was written to a group of people who had formed that church on the basis of their profession of faith. While the apostles or other founders would doubtless have assumed that each profession at the outset was genuine (just as we do today), the passing of time revealed that such was not always the case (1 John 2:19). MacArthur concludes that when the only criterion for salvation is knowing and believing some basic facts about Christ and that obedience is optional, then a person's one-time profession of faith becomes more valid

than the ongoing testimony of his life-style for determining whether he is a true believer (p. 17). He, of course, denies that this is so.

Part One is devoted to a discussion of the issues. The more extreme views of some dispensationalists are described as they touch upon the issue at hand. He quotes from Hodges (*The Gospel Under Siege*, p. 14) who says that conversion to Christ involves "no spiritual commitment whatsoever." He cites Ryrie (*Balancing the Christian Life*, pp. 169-70) as supporting the position that salvation does not obligate the believer to change his life-style, make any commitment, or even have a willingness to yield to Christ's lordship. To be fair, the point Ryrie makes is that to add such requirements to the receiving of salvation makes it something less than a gift of God's pure grace. Nevertheless, Ryrie does not seem to view commitment as an integral part of faith, and for this MacArthur rightly objects to the misleading statements.

Another point of discussion is the terminology "carnal Christian." Although the expression seems uncomplicated—after all, Scripture does call some Christians "carnal" (1 Cor 3:3)—some interpreters have handled it in a different way than the rest. Instead of seeing it as a description of Christians who for a time were acting in carnal ways, some have virtually implied a separate state of the spiritual life. This idea can be extended to fit the concepts of the "second blessing," "deeper life," or "victorious life" emphasis which also assume a separate plane of existence for some Christians. The converse of this is that the "carnal Christian" state is also a legitimate condition of true believers (although not as admirable as the "spiritual" plane), and that unbroken carnality is no reason for questioning the validity of one's regenerative experience. The author points out that some are proposing that "the norm for salvation is to accept Jesus as Savior without yielding to Him as Lord. They make the incredible claim that any other teaching amounts to a false gospel 'because it subtly adds works to the clear and simple condition set forth in the word of God'" (pp. 27-28).

What MacArthur calls "the two clearest statements on the way of salvation in all of Scripture" emphasize the lordship of Jesus. He cites Acts 16:31, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved," and Romans 10:9, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." These references certainly seem to support his contention that anything less than a belief in Jesus as one's Lord does not fulfill the Biblical instruction. To argue, as some apparently do, that "Lord" here simply means "God" might be granted without changing the force of the statement. After all, for a believer to trust Jesus Christ as God surely implies also an acknowledgment of his responsibility to his God.

In Part Two MacArthur discusses how Jesus heralded His gospel. A number of incidents are selected from the ministry of Christ in which He confronted a variety of individuals and dealt with their spiritual needs. The author is particularly concerned in this section to show that Christ's approach was not that "putrefying inclusivism that in effect sees almost any kind of positive response to Jesus as tantamount to saving faith" (p. 37). Rather,

Jesus rejected shallow response and always went to deeper issues. MacArthur is clearly distressed by the modern tendency to treat as authentic faith the widest kind of responding to Christ as long as the right formulas are recited.

The case of Nicodemus is the earliest of Christ's one-on-one evangelistic encounters recorded in the gospels, and is chosen by the author as his first illustration in this section. This occurs in John's Gospel immediately after the reference to those who "believed in His name" in Jerusalem but Jesus did not believe in them (John 2:23-25). Obviously not all belief was saving faith as far as Jesus' understanding was concerned, for His knowledge of their hearts caused Him to withhold full acceptance of them. Whether Nicodemus was one of those referred to in 2:23 cannot be ascertained, but the point in the context has been made. Not all faith is saving faith. Jesus therefore dealt with Nicodemus as a man who needed to be born again. As the Israelites of old whose sin had caused them to face the judgment of God in the attack of fiery serpents, Nicodemus also needed to recognize his sinfulness and turn in faith to the Divinely-given Sinbearer (Num 21:6-9; John 3:14-16). The One to whom Nicodemus must look was God's unique Son, and the implications in that statement are profound. Surely more is involved than just believing in the historical facts about Jesus. It is difficult to see how a changed attitude toward sin (i.e., repentance) can be excluded from this saving look, in the light of vv. 20-21. A few verses later, obeying the Son is shown to be implicit in the concept (v. 36).

Another chapter is devoted to the encounter of Jesus with the woman at the well (John 4). In our Lord's invitation to the woman to "drink of the water that I shall give" (4:14), MacArthur raises the question whether "drink" means appropriation apart from commitment (p. 52ff.). His answer is that the factor of commitment is always present in true faith, and that Jesus' offer of living water as a gift to the woman in no way removes that element. The context surely supports this understanding. The woman was confronted in a natural but direct way about the sin in her life. When she quickly drew the conclusion that He was a prophet, she tried to divert the conversation to a traditional religious controversy. Jesus, however, dismissed that diversion with one statement and then drew her back to the vital issue: God, and her relationship to Him. Only then did He reveal Himself to her as the prophesied Messiah (v. 26) and the Giver of living water (v. 10). Evidence of her changed life was immediate. She at once began to point others to the Messiah she had met, doing so in a delicate way that would arouse curiosity rather than produce almost certain rejection if such a woman had tried to tell the village men who Jesus was (4:28-29, 39).

In discussing Christ's confrontation with Matthew, MacArthur indulges in a bit of extravagant language to paint his word picture of the event, perhaps revealing his rhetorical skills more than total dependence upon the text. For instance, he describes Matthew the publican as "unequivocally the vilest, most wretched sinner in Capernaum" (p. 62). Of the banquet Matthew gave in order to introduce his friends to Jesus, he says, "This gathering was attended by some of the most notorious, base, villainous people in the history of banquets" (p. 63). While not trying to excuse the sinfulness of Matthew and his friends, this reviewer considers those descriptions somewhat stronger



than the Biblical passage itself requires. Of course, this has no real bearing on the issue being discussed.

What is important to note, however, is that Jesus explained to the group that His presence among those who were openly regarded as sinners by the general populace was not an oversight on His part but was at the heart of His purpose. "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). Focusing on sinners and confronting them with the solution to their guilt and enslavement was the reason why Jesus came. A call to repentance was the first recorded message Jesus ever gave (Matt 4:17). It followed upon a similar proclamation by John the Baptist, and was the basis for the message which the apostles preached (Acts 3:19; 26:20). MacArthur states it this way: "No one who neglects to call sinners to repentance is preaching the gospel according to Jesus" (p. 66).

One of the chapters in this section is devoted to the rich young ruler and his meeting with Jesus (Matt 19:16–26; Luke 18:18–30). This eager young man apparently had led an exemplary life. At least Jesus did not challenge his claim directly. Furthermore he had an expressed interest in obtaining eternal life. When he asked Jesus, "What good thing shall I do . . . ?," our Lord did not chide him for expressing it in terms of *doing*, as though he must have been thinking in terms of works to be done to acquire righteousness. All of his traditional upbringing would have led him to think this way. However, he may have meant no more than those who asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" (John 6:28); to which Jesus replied, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (v. 29).

But then Jesus proceeded to tell the rich young ruler that he must sell all that he had, give it to the poor, and follow Him. He did not mean that charitable giving is the means to salvation. He was dealing with that specific person and was addressing his particular need (Christ did not approach others this way). What he was asking was for this man's total allegiance. Mere eagerness and enthusiasm was not enough. A submission to Christ was the requirement. To this reviewer, this assessment seems correct. Christ could have asked this man to accept a few facts about Jesus (admittedly at that time before Calvary, the precise formula would have been somewhat anticipatory) and then pronounced him "saved" if that were all that was involved. On the contrary, Jesus showed himself to be uninterested in superficial faith.

MacArthur's summarizing statement clarifies his point and guards against misinterpretation of his discussion. "I do not believe, and have never taught, that a person coming to Christ must understand fully all the implications of sin, repentance, or the lordship of Christ. Even after growing in his understanding for years as a Christian, he will not know all of these in their full depth. But there must be a *willingness* to obey. Furthermore, repentance and submission are no more human works than faith itself. They are every bit the work of God—not elements added to faith, but essential aspects of God's work of faith in a human heart" (p. 88).

Additional instances, such as that of Zacchaeus and Judas, are discussed to demonstrate that saving faith is clearly not mere profession but has a changed life as part and parcel of the genuine experience. Zacchaeus and Judas are contrasting instances of this truth.

Chapter 9, "He Offers a Yoke of Rest," is devoted to a discussion of Matt 11:25-30. The opening paragraphs are certain to capture one's attention, particularly if he has grown up in evangelical circles and has absorbed the vocabulary and clichés that are so common among these groups. The author reminds us that Scripture "never once exhorts sinners to 'accept Christ'" (p. 106). He further points out that popular evangelistic terminology such as "make a decision for Christ," "ask Jesus into your heart," "try Jesus," and "accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior" is not Biblical language either. He may be a bit strong when he says it "violates both the spirit and the terminology of the Biblical summons to unbelievers," but he endeavors to explain his point. He declares that the gospel invitation is not an entreaty for sinners to allow Jesus into their lives, but an appeal to repent and follow Him. "It demands not just passive acceptance of Christ but active submission to Him as well. Those unwilling to surrender to Christ cannot recruit Him to be part of a crowded life" (p. 106).

In his treatment of Matt 11:25-30, the author isolates what he calls five essential elements of genuine conversion. They are so inextricably linked, he asserts, that not one of them can be eliminated from the biblical concept of saving faith. These elements are humility (11:25), revelation (11:27), repentance (11:28), faith (v. 28), and submission (v. 29). He concludes by arguing that "Take my yoke upon you" argues against the notion that one can take Jesus as Savior but not as Lord (p. 113).

Part Three discusses the way in which Jesus illustrates His message by analyzing selected parables from our Lord's teaching. The author fully acknowledges that parables cannot be pressed beyond reasonable bounds in view of their symbolic character (p. 136). Nevertheless he makes every effort to explain them in their immediate and larger contexts so as to find their essential message.

Beginning with the parables of Matthew 13, the author interprets them as illustrative of the kingdom of heaven (as Jesus himself indicated, Matt 13:11). He further explains the kingdom of heaven as God's rule over the earth and in the hearts of men, although it "exists now in mystery form. Christ does not now exercise His full divine will as King over all the earth, though He is ultimately sovereign. He rules as King only among those who believe" (p. 118). MacArthur explains that this aspect of God's kingdom was a mystery to those who were looking only for a political monarchy. He explains further in a footnote his understanding that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are not separate entities but are interchangeable expressions, as clearly demonstrated by the parallel passages in Matthew 13:11, Mark 4:11, and Luke 8:10.

The parable of the sower and the soils is explained graphically with much application as depicting the varying response which the gospel encounters when it is proclaimed. He concludes that the only circumstance which receives Christ's approval is depicted by the good soil which produced fruit. Thus the good soil pictures the believer; the others depict pretenders or absolute rejecters. "Fruit-bearing is the whole point of agriculture. It is also the ultimate test of salvation. Jesus said, 'Every good tree bears good fruit; but the rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and

thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits' (Matt 7:17-20). . . . Fruit, not foliage, is the mark of true salvation" (p. 126).

Although some interpreters continue to make allowance for genuine belief in the cases of the seed on the rocky ledge and in the thorny soil, the view espoused in this book is certainly more obvious from the Biblical text. Only one kind of hearer received Christ's commendation in this parable. It is doubtful whether any other explanation would be suggested if one were not being protective of another agenda. It is, of course, clearly indicated in the parable that not all of the seed in the good soil was equally productive, and it goes without saying that fruitfulness does not occur immediately in the agricultural world of this parable. Nevertheless this parable does explain that everyone in the "good soil" category is fruitful to some extent.

In his discussion of the parables of the hid treasure and the pearl the author interprets them as picturing believers who make a complete commitment of all that they have in order to obtain the kingdom of heaven. This explanation surely fits well with the thesis MacArthur is proposing, and this reviewer finds no objection to the truth being thus elicited. Other teachings of Jesus make it clear that halfhearted response is not good enough.

Another view of these parables is held by some interpreters. They explain the man who finds the treasure and the merchant who buys the pearl as Christ who gave all that He had to acquire believers. Inasmuch as Christ is the leading man in the other parables of the series (the sower, the tares), a certain consistency is thus maintained. One of MacArthur's reasons for rejecting this view, although he does so graciously, is his assertion that sinners could hardly be called a hidden treasure, for they are useless debris until after Christ has redeemed them. From one standpoint this is certainly true. However, it must not be forgotten that man was the crown of God's creation and even fallen man still bears to some extent the divine image (Ps 8:3-8). If one holds this view of these two parables, their use as corroboration for MacArthur's thesis would not be applicable.

To conclude this section the author discusses the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, the thief on the cross, and the parables of the hundred sheep, the ten coins, and the two sons. Several of these do not bear directly on the subject of submission to Christ's Lordship, but they do pertain to the message Christ proclaimed. MacArthur explains the parable of the prodigal son as an illustration of the fact that acknowledgment of sin and repentance of it preceded the son's receiving of his father's forgiveness and entrance into his joy. He argues that the elder brother was no less lost than was the prodigal, but he did not recognize it. In view of the fact that this parable, along with the others in the series, was addressed to an audience composed largely of hostile Pharisees and scribes (Luke 15:1-3), it seems appropriate to explain the elder brother in some such fashion. Even though he too was lost, the father in the parable sought him as well (Luke 15:28).

Part Four, the final main section of the book before the appendixes, concerns the doctrinal content of Christ's message. The key concepts bearing upon the topic of this book are selected for treatment in separate chapters.

In the first chapter of this section, MacArthur discusses repentance and its relationship to the topic at hand. He deplores the present tendency to avoid speaking of repentance from sin when the gospel is presented to

unbelievers. He further criticizes the teaching of some with whom this avoidance is no oversight. This is not a recent problem. For many years there have been in the evangelical camp strong advocates of the view that repentance is a human responsibility which is too often erroneously added to faith or belief. He quotes L. S. Chafer who wrote that the New Testament did not impose repentance upon the unsaved as a condition of salvation (pp. 160–61).

This is a crucial matter for this issue. Is repentance a separate act of man which is an additional requirement for salvation? Is it prior to faith or a result of faith? Or is it an integral part of saving faith? Some who criticize MacArthur for adding this “work” to salvation have not carefully considered what he actually says. He comments, “Above all, repentance is *not* a pre-salvation attempt to set one’s life in order. The call to repentance is not a command to make sin right *before* turning to Christ in faith. Rather it is a command to recognize one’s lawlessness and hate it, to turn one’s back on it and flee to Christ, embracing Him with wholehearted devotion” (p. 163).

What is repentance? Etymologically it means a change of mind. However, in the contexts in which Jesus used it with reference to man’s response to God, He meant far more than just a superficial change of opinion. He was talking about a person’s attitude, his mindset, his way of thinking about God and His righteous demands. This kind of repentance will usually be accompanied by sorrow for sin, but whether or not there are tears of remorse is not the vital issue. It is the change in attitude that is the significant factor.

Repentance is very closely tied, therefore, to faith and conversion. Numerous times these terms are used together. When this happens, repentance is always put first (Matt 21:32; Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; 20:21; Heb 6:1). They are not, however, three separate acts of the soul, or three steps to salvation. They are three aspects of one act of the soul whereby the believer responds positively to the offer of Christ in the gospel. It is for this reason that the Bible does not always use all three terms to describe persons who receive salvation. On one occasion Peter invited his hearers to “repent and be converted” in order to have sins forgiven and salvation obtained (Acts 3:19). He did not mention faith at all, but he didn’t need to because that was understood as implicit in the invitation. To separate repentance from faith and make it either optional or a subsequent act of believers is contrary to the teaching and practice of Christ and of the apostles whom He commissioned. Jesus said in His commission to them, “Repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). Paul preached, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent” (Acts 17:30). He wrote the same thing, “Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? (Rom 2:4). Peter wrote similarly: “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). Surely repentance here is regarded as an alternative word for salvation, interchangeable with faith even when it may emphasize a different aspect. In the opinion of this reviewer, what MacArthur has to say about repentance needs to be said, and he says it well.

Another key issue discussed in this section is discipleship. MacArthur criticizes those who separate discipleship from salvation as if it were an

entirely separate issue, and that one can be had without the other. Great care must be exercised here, for those who have fostered this idea have done their work well. In fact this distinction is regarded in some evangelical circles as a basic principle for understanding the New Testament. A fresh look at this matter is long overdue.

The term "disciple" is used frequently in the New Testament, and not always with exactly the same meaning. Three distinct meanings can be found, with some overlap between them. The basic concept in the term depicts a learner or a follower in the pupil-teacher sense. Hence we often find the term used to describe the twelve who became followers of Jesus (Matt 10:1). They were followers in the sense that they enlisted as learners under his teaching and attached themselves to him. Jesus operated no formal school but taught by His deeds as well as His words wherever he went in His travels, and the disciples literally followed Him about.

Another use of the term in the New Testament is applied to all believers. In the Great Commission, the twelve were commanded to "make disciples of" all nations (Matt 28:19). He used the verb from the same word-family. Even before this, however, there were other disciples besides the twelve (Luke 6:17; 19:37). Jesus frequently spoke to the crowds about what it meant to be His disciple. It would demand their primary allegiance (Matt 10:37), the risk even of their lives upon occasion (Luke 14:27), and a total commitment of all that one has (Luke 14:33). It is clear that acceptance as a true follower of Christ cannot be purchased by the believer at any price and yet it will cost him everything.

A final use of "disciple" shows that it can refer to temporary followers of Christ also. There were some in Jesus' day who followed Him for a time with a casual attachment, but when the issues became clearer they left (John 6:66). Thus the term itself merely means "a follower." The nature of that discipleship must be derived from the larger context.

It is the clear evidence of the New Testament that the concept of discipleship is intended to portray the relationship of all the followers of Christ. Every believer is a disciple. Although there were instances of temporary, superficial, or otherwise inadequate disciples, there are no instances in the New Testament of the application of this term to a superior or more advanced level of belief. Those who have separated discipleship from salvation have not done us any service. Their interest in preserving the simplicity of the gospel offer and the avoidance of any notion of works-righteousness may be commendable, but the means they have used are not what Scripture teaches and have opened the door to serious abuse. One must recognize, of course, that some believers are more exemplary disciples than others, and some make more rapid progress than others. Yet the teaching of Scripture is clear. A believer and follower of Christ by Scriptural precept and by definition is one who believes and who follows. He is not merely someone who made a creedal confession at some time or other, but is one who continues to believe. He is not just someone who made some initial motions that might have indicated spiritual activity (like the seed on the stony or thorny ground), but is one who continues to follow. And every true believer is a disciple.

One may easily anticipate the objection that will be raised to this explanation. Does this mean that salvation is dependent upon one's perseverance? Is one saved by Christ, but kept saved by man? Certainly not. The Scriptural



teaching is that true faith results in a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). That new creation will reveal itself by its actions. Those actions will not secure salvation, but they are the inevitable consequence of it.

The concluding portion of the book (Part Five) consists of two appendices. The first examines the gospel as presented by the apostles in their writings during the early days of the Christian church. He looks at Paul, Jude, Peter, James, John, and the writer of Hebrews. MacArthur concludes that the gospel proclaimed by the apostles was the same as that preached by Jesus. "It is a small gate and a narrow road. It is free but it costs everything. And though it is appropriated by faith, it cannot fail to produce the fruit of true righteousness in the life and behavior of the believer" (p. 220).

Appendix 2 examines the records of church history from the *Didache* and Ignatius onward to support the premise of this book that submission to the Lordship of Christ with subsequent obedience to His commands is part of the salvation experience for everyone, not an option for some. In this section the author answers the charge that "Lordship salvation" is a recent addition to the gospel by showing that the consistent understanding of the church throughout her history has been that becoming a Christian involved trusting and obeying the Savior, not just acknowledging certain facts about Him.

The main objections that this reviewer has encountered in relation to the position Dr. MacArthur espouses are these: 1) Lordship salvation is an addition to the gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone. 2) It makes assurance of salvation impossible prior to death. 3) It fosters a judgmental spirit toward others. 4) It confuses salvation with discipleship.

Most of these objections have been dealt with earlier in this review. In summation, however, it may be fairly said that the author does not create the dichotomy between salvation and "Lordship" additions. Rather he is responding to the dichotomy which the objectors have proposed. MacArthur sees salvation as that one grand entity whereby the believer receives Jesus as Lord on the basis of initial faith, not as some subsequent and perhaps even optional act. A friend of this reviewer has used the analogy of marriage: "When I married my wife, I did not marry her as cook, as housekeeper, as lover, and as potential mother of my children. I married *her*, and all of these aspects were part of it." Repentance is another way of saying the sinner is recognizing his need and is turning from his dead works to serve the living God. Our saving relationship is to Christ. New life, obedience, enlistment as a disciple—all of this is implicit in receiving Christ by faith.

Is assurance rendered impossible or meaningless? Not at all. The Scripture promises eternal life to those who exercise saving faith. But Scripture also indicates that saving faith is not just intellectual acceptance of certain facts, but is a commitment of the heart to Christ the Lord, and this will inevitably be followed by demonstrations of new life. These are evidences which can be examined, and the Bible tells us to do just that (2 Cor 13:5). The view taught in this book properly questions the grounds of a false assurance, but it is in harmony with the Biblical expressions on the subject. It is true that some could use certain conclusions suggested in these pages and become judgmental toward others. That is a danger that exists among all Christians, whether or not they adopt the position of this book. Nevertheless, the truth must be accepted while avoiding the danger of misapplying it.



To those who feel that salvation has been confused in this volume with discipleship, this reviewer would urge a careful rereading of these pages. The author makes a good case for his conclusions. Much that has been written on this topic has needed rethinking.

In conclusion some cautions might prove helpful to all who are interested enough in this topic to have read the book and to have thought deeply about the issues. First, be careful about misrepresenting those who verbalize these matters in a different way. It is always possible for a writer who is emphasizing a certain aspect of truth to express himself in an exaggerated way and open himself to being misunderstood. One often suspects that this becomes a factor in the debates between "Lordship salvation" and "easy-believism." The full context of a writer's comments should be evaluated before too quickly castigating him for a particular statement.

Second, we should avoid fragmentizing Christ. The separation of Christ as Savior from Christ as Lord is not a Biblical concept. It is Christ Himself whom we must present to lost men. He is the God-Man, the only one who could be the Savior. The invitation to trust Him carries with it implicitly the obligation to obey Him because of who He is. Believers do not make Him the Lord of their lives at some later time. They may recognize more fully the implications of their relationship to Him as they grow in their understanding of Christian truth, but it is not an option to choose if they so desire. It was always inherent in true faith as the Bible describes it.

Third, beware of the danger of legalistically categorizing others. It can be tempting to establish one's own code of righteous behavior, and then judge others who do not conform. Spiritual "fruit inspectors" can easily fall into the trap that Jesus described as searching for the speck in another's eye while oblivious to the beam projecting from one's own. At the same time, it is equally unwarranted to ignore a continuously sinful life and offer assurance of salvation to such people simply because they have made a profession of faith at an earlier time. There is such a thing as false profession.

Finally, in looking at other Christians it must be remembered that spiritual growth does not occur at equal rates among all believers, and that instant maturity never happens. Those who are more experienced in their faith are to assist the weak and restore the fallen (Rom 15:1; Gal 6:1).

*The Gospel According to Jesus* is a thought-provoking book. The discussions it has prompted are important ones and should cause every believer to examine again the crucial issues of Christian faith so as to be true to the Scripture and honest with sinners. Dr. MacArthur has raised these issues effectively.



## BOOK REVIEWS

*A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation*, edited by Donald K. McKim. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986. Pp. 312. \$14.95. Paper.

Donald McKim, Professor of Theology at Dubuque Seminary, has given us another wide-ranging collection of articles on contemporary issues. Previously, he edited works on *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind* (Eerdmans, 1986) and *The Authoritative Word* (Eerdmans, 1983). This most recent work, focusing on issues in contemporary hermeneutics, is perhaps his most helpful work to-date. The articles are representative of theological worlds as distant as the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, British evangelicalism (Anthony Thiselton), and reader response hermeneutics/liberation theologies (Bonino and Schussler Fiorenza). The contributors include Daniel Harrington, Bruce Birch, David Steinmetz, Gerhard von Rad, William LaSor, Walt Kaiser, Anthony Thiselton, Karlfried Froehlich, Thomas Gillespie, Patrich Keifert, Rene Padilla, Charles Kraft, Richard Jacobson, Thomas Provence, Peter Macky, Jose Bonino and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza.

The entries are divided into four parts: "Biblical Avenues," "Theological Attitudes," "Current Assessments," and "Contemporary Approaches." The initial section on "Biblical Avenues" contains offerings by Birch on OT hermeneutical concerns and by Harrington on NT hermeneutical issues. In addition, Steinmetz argues for the value of pre-critical exegesis as opposed to modern critical approaches, and von Rad and LaSor discuss issues of typology and *sensus plenior*. The first section basically deals with matters of canon, theological centers, sociological criticism, the value of the historical-critical method and the relation of the ancient and modern contexts of the author and interpreter (the two horizons).

The second section includes contributions by Thiselton and Kaiser, leaders in the contemporary debate over evangelical hermeneutics. Thiselton shows a broad grasp of issues in existential and linguistic studies in his articles, "The New Hermeneutic" and "The Legitimacy and Necessity of Hermeneutics." The second article should be mandatory reading for all evangelical seminary students. Kaiser's article characteristically sounds his concern for determining the single intent of the biblical author.

The third section presents essays by Froehlich, Gillespie and Keifert which wrestle with the relationships of meaning, language, interpretation and understanding. Froehlich's article is very helpful in finding a balance between the outright acceptance or rejection of the historical-critical method.

The concluding essays include contemporary approaches that are more reader oriented rather than text oriented. Peter Macky's article, which originally appeared in *The Theological Educator*, describes the current shift away

from historical interpretation to a literary approach. Kraft and Padilla examine matters of contextualization. Bonino offers a hermeneutic that seeks to be faithful to exegesis of Scripture and concerns of liberation theologians. The most radical essay is that of Schussler Fiorenza who rejects all parts of Scripture or interpretations of Scripture that fail to support her feminist theology. The moderating approach of Bonino is certainly worthy of praise in light of Schussler Fiorenza's radicalism.

This volume deserves a wide readership as McKim continues to provide the Christian community with creative contributions to biblical and theological studies. The book will certainly make for interesting reading and lively discussion in hermeneutics classes and seminars in days to come.

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*Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible*, by Leland Ryken. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987. Pp. 382. \$15.95. Paper. *Words of Life: A Literary Introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987. Pp. 182. \$11.95. Paper.

Revising an earlier book is perhaps an author's most difficult challenge. The original has set a precedent (whether good or ill)—defining an audience, projecting a literary identity of the author, and adding something (if only bulk) to the world of books. In a revision, the author must contend with these issues as well as fashion a work with its own character and contribution. *Words of Delight* and *Words of Life* are revisions of a one-volume book *Literature of the Bible* (1974) and offer far more than bulk to Biblical studies. They enrich Ryken's earlier discussion about the relevance of literature to Biblical exegesis; moreover, the audience for the *Words* books, due to some skillful revision, is potentially enormous.

*Words of Delight* and *Words of Life*, not surprisingly, retain the best of the earlier book: Old Testament narrative in Genesis and in certain history books outside the Pentateuch; explications of epic (Exodus), tragedy (Job), and Biblical poetry; analysis of the Gospels and Pauline oratory; and one of the finest studies of the Revelation that I have read. Ryken's thesis in both books is of course the same, to defend a literary approach to Bible study by explaining how to read Biblical literature, by identifying primary genres, and by illustrating the theory through explications of sample passages. In executing this plan, he has succeeded well.

This success lies partially in several primary strengths of the books which reveals an assertive but personable voice. The most obvious quality is its persuasive argument for knowledge of literature as a prerequisite for close reading of Scripture, a premise that Ryken wastes no time in asserting. On the first page of the introduction, he notes that the Bible "resembles a literary work more than anything else. The thing that it is emphatically *not* is . . . a theological outline with proof texts attached" (p. 11). This telling remark not only establishes the author's critical stance—an issue that *can* raise at least one crucial question (which I shall discuss later)—but also challenges readers

to look suspiciously upon any approach to the Bible that ignores its literary features. Ryken's introductory remarks may discourage some readers from going further, but if they continue, they have no excuse to be surprised by what they find.

A second strength of *Words* is the author's formalist approach, which buttresses his conservative stance toward the Biblical text. This effect becomes apparent as readers move through the major topics. In *Words of Delight*, for example, Ryken's treatment of Narrative (6 chapters), Poetry (5 chapters), and other literary forms (4 chapters)—encomium, proverb, satire, and drama—presumes that knowledge of genres is vital to valid interpretation of the Biblical text. This premise is discernible, moreover, without explicit statements about the Ryken's views of textuality. The object of study in *Words* is neither the human authors of Scripture nor its readers but the text. However, Ryken limits his own liberty as a critic; soon after declaring his literary perspective, he urges readers to use the literary approach with care (p. 20). He then gives periodical reminders about the spiritual dimension of the Biblical text: its "unifying purpose," he says, "is to reveal God to people so they might know how to order their lives. . . ." After all, he continues, the Bible "is a religious book from start to finish. Consciousness of God pervades it" (p. 30). Indeed it does, as shown by Ryken's many discussions about the cyclical pattern in Scripture of rebellion, punishment, repentance, and forgiveness—an ongoing dramatization of the folly of man and the grace of God. Ryken's explications of this cycle reinforce the theological nature of the Bible. Lest someone read the conclusion of *Words of Delight* more carefully than the beginning or middle, that reader will face a final note: "The Bible is a continuously religious book . . . always ready to sacrifice literary concerns for didactic ones, and even when it does not do so, its literary dimension is permeated with religious and moral preoccupations" (p. 354).

Yet another strength of *Words of Delight* is the sketches of literary background that illuminate the English Bible in its many literary forms. He uses this methodology in each of the two major sections, on narrative and on poetry respectively. In Part 2, on Biblical poetry, for example, he devotes three chapters to the practical matters of language, artistry, and ways to explicate Biblical verse. These chapters offer much to the nonspecialist, who might simply pass over poetic language in either Testament or would turn to Keil and Delitzsch, Leupold, or Lenski. But literary scholars also will appreciate these chapters, as reminders of the important connections between poetry in general and that in Scripture. In fact, these three chapters enhance the value of the introductory statement to the section:

poetry pervades the Bible. . . . [E]ven parts of the Bible that are written in prose use the resources of poetic language. We would be hard pressed to find a page of the Bible that does not require us to know the elements of poetry that I discuss in this chapter. . . . [T]he ability to interpret poetry is a requirement, not an option, when we read the Bible. (p. 160)

Whoever has felt intimidated by these remarks will appreciate Ryken's instructions about how to read poetry, especially as they prepare the reader to deal with the Psalms and the Song of Songs.

Ryken displays a remarkably clear sense of a large and diverse audience in this section on poetry, chief merit of the *Words* books. Conservatives will approve of *Words*, due primarily to the presupposition of the integrity of the biblical text, implicit in the following typical comments: "The realism of biblical narrative shows us God's reaching down into earthly reality . . ." (p. 39); or, "In biblical tragedy, the ways of God are known. The tragic heroes [unlike Antigone, Oedipus, or Menelaus] are without excuse for having violated God's commands" (p. 156). While Ryken acknowledges that people cannot control all circumstances, he treats the sing of Samson and Saul forthrightly, as the expression of their own defiance; and their tragic deaths are but the punishment meted out by a loving but holy God. Liberals too will find much to ponder. The author does not write to debate the authorship of the Pentateuch or the canonicity of passages such as John 8:1-11. He rather wishes to explain the meaning of verses according to given literary genres, showing how the dynamics of those genres create mental pictures that enliven the text. This approach frees Ryken from discussing polarizing issues such as inspiration and inerrancy (doctrines which I espouse). Errantists could hardly want more than that. Even unbelievers should appreciate the information in the *Words* books. It is presented lucidly, concisely, and without polemic, though Ryken's reminders about the theological character of the text are never far away. Moreover, his kind but firm voice, is appreciated by thoughtful readers whether regenerate or agnostic. Such an audience demands not only cogent arguments but well-chosen words—"just the right words," to quote Koheleth (Eccl 12:10, NIV). Ryken appreciates this verse also; his title *Words of Delight* is his translation of the same phrase.

Ryken's book has just the right words, perhaps, but scholarly readers will notice a major weakness—one that appeared in *Literature of the Bible* (1974) and will linger until literary critics, Biblicists, and hermeneuticists develop more fully the implications of divine revelation and inspiration as premises for textuality and criticism. In short, plenary verbal inspiration would imply that the genres, as well as the other features of Scripture, are flawless. As such, the Biblical text should be the normative text for literary criticism, with supplemental (but important) principles drawn from extrabiblical writing.

Ryken's approach in *Words* seems different. He uses classical epic, tragedy, and other genres apparently because they exist in ancient literature and through the centuries have been accepted as literary. The forms, therefore, would seem to be autonomous and autotelic. If they are independent (though not God-breathed), with an ontological significance equivalent to the biblical forms, how can the literature of the Bible, a text ultimately from God, truly be superior to the writings of Homer, Virgil, Dante, and the others? To be sure, the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid*, and the *Divine Comedy* are splendid works; but by what criteria? Certainly not primarily because tradition or some individual talent says so. Certain classical literature is outstanding, it can be argued, because it reflects the artistry, imagination, and depth of thought in biblical literature—a critical position not at all apparent in *Words*.

This theoretical weakness, however, should not limit the books' usefulness either for general readers or for scholars interested in formalist criticism as a valuable link between the Bible and literature. Both *Words of Delight* and



*Words of Life* offer abundant, valuable commentary for the reader whose heart, like Ryken's pen, seeks just the right words to know God better and to study and apply the passages in His artful, instructive book.

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*No Falling Words: Expositions of the Book of Joshua*, by Dale Ralph Davis. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988. Pp. 204. \$9.95. Paper.

This is the "ice-breaker" volume in Baker's series called "Expositor's Guide to the Historical Books." Since virtually all the available material on the Old Testament Historical Books (or "Former Prophets," pp. 11-12) is either aridly scholarly or overly popular/devotional, there is a definite "niche" for such an approach—if it is done well.

In that regard, Ralph Davis, formerly Assistant Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary and currently pastor of a Presbyterian church in Maryland, is well-qualified to undertake such a challenge. In fact, such a two-level (perhaps middle-level) approach is exactly the way Davis thinks commentaries should be written. As he states in the Preface: "Certainly, all the technical matters (linguistic, archaeological, critical) are in order; but we must bring the fragments together in an expository treatment that is not ashamed to stoop to the level of application" (p. 8).

Davis's point is well taken and has vast implications for both classroom and pulpit. Far too often even evangelical studies of the Hebrew Scriptures or the Old Testament in English have been treated as either "long ago and far away," or carelessly spiritualized (even allegorized) in a "quick-fix" attempt to make them relevant to the church today. This volume, despite several points of general doctrinal disagreement centered around Davis's mild covenant theology perspective, is a solid example showing it is possible for exposition of the Old Testament to bring about, "without torturing and twisting . . . the comfort and correction of the saints" (p. 8). Based on precious texts like Rom 15:4 and 2 Tim 3:16-17, we should be able to expect no less from exposition of the Old Testament. Perhaps *No Falling Words* will prove to be a compelling "model" for a future group of careful, but readable and pastorally sensitive evangelical Old Testament commentaries. (See also W. Kaiser's not unrelated call for a "new generation" of OT commentaries in his *Malachi: God's Unchanging Love*.)

The strengths of this book are numerous, mostly attributable to Davis's dual background as teacher and pastor. He balances adequate depth with consistent relevance throughout. For example, he repeatedly utilizes the Hebrew structure of Joshua to expertly inform his homiletical constructions. Yet, he is never very far from the needed illustration or touch of humor (especially notable in chapter titles) and what the truth being expounded means for the reader's life. The background factors noted and the scholarly sources quoted are done so judiciously, illuminating the text rather than laying down a technical "fog." The discussions of key texts and problems are full enough to be helpful, but succinct enough to maintain the flow of the

exposition (e.g., the miracle of the parting of the Jordan River in Josh 3, pp. 36-39; and the location of Ai, pp. 65-66).

Virtually the only shortcomings of *No Falling Words* (the title taken from Josh 21:45 and 23:14, asserting God's great promises will not fail, p. 8) are that: 1) it is a little too "short" (excuse the pun) for those dealing with the text more in-depth (whether teachers, preachers, or Bible study leaders); and 2) it should have been "crowned" with a (even brief select) bibliography for further study in regard to Joshua.

In summary, this is an excellent work that especially deserves wide usage among evangelicals in both classroom and pulpit. Accordingly, this reviewer eagerly anticipates Davis's forthcoming treatment of Judges, also in Baker's "Expositor's Guide to the Historical Books" series.

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*Joshua, Judges, Ruth* by John Gray. The New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986. Pp. xiii + 427. \$12.95. Paper.

This volume of The New Century Bible Commentary is a thorough revision of Gray's earlier commentary (1967, rev. 1977). The book begins with a general introduction to Joshua and Judges in which Gray locates these two books firmly within the traditions of the "Deuteronomistic School." Gray believes that the two books underwent a double edition, one at the end of the monarchy and another in post-exilic times. This is attested, among other data, by the twofold farewell addresses at the end of Joshua (23, "by the Deuteronomistic compiler" and 24, "by the redactor" p. 5).

After a brief general discussion concerning the theology, and source and composition of the "Deuteronomistic History," Gray turns to a consideration of these two historical books. Because they are the product of the theologizing "holy war" tendencies of the Deuteronomists, any thought of an actual historical invasion by Israel is rejected, as is the canonical presentation of the settlement and apportionment of the land. Nevertheless, Gray suggests that there had irrupted into Palestine a militant and "virile group committed to the exclusive worship of Yahweh expressed in simple terms of faith and worship and a social ethic, the obligations of the covenant, however that may have been celebrated" (p. 10). This was the "Rachel group" made up of Ephraim and Benjamin, with whom Manasseh (Machir) often participated. These tribes drew and assimilated to themselves their "kindred and immediate neighbors" (p. 26—such as the "Leah group"), and thus together they gradually formed a sacred community that shared its faith especially at such cult centers as Gilgal, Bethel, and Shechem. Therefore, "the appreciation of the often anachronistic presentation of the settlement as a sweeping conquest and consolidation as in the Deuteronomistic history and the pre-Deuteronomistic compilations in Josh 2-11 and Judg 3:2-12:6 and of the nature of the source-traditions of those liturgical and aetiological, as in most of Josh 2-8; 9; 10:16-27, leaves a residue of sober history which, for the most part, proves much less spectacular than in the compilations" (p. 26). A critical discussion

of the transmission and restoration of the text closes out Gray's general introduction.

The remainder of the book is devoted to special introduction and commentary on each of the three biblical books under consideration. The special introduction to Joshua centers on the suggested sources (largely drawn from local historical and legendary traditions) used by the Deuteronomistic compilers and redactors. Gray indicates that the extant canonical book contains three main sections: a narrative of the conquest (1-12), made up largely of a main source drawn together by an early monarchic compiler (2-11) to which the Deuteronomists added an introduction and closing lists of kings and inserted a passage relative to "the sacrament of the covenant at Shechem" (p. 43; 8:30-35); various accounts combined by the Deuteronomistic historian and worked over by the exilic redactor concerning the apportionment of the tribes (13-19), cities of refuge (20), and Levitical settlements (21:1-42), and a Deuteronomistic epilogue concerning the occupation of the land (21:43-45); and a third closing portion made up of Deuteronomistic and priestly additions (22) and two formal addresses by Joshua (23, 24), the first being the natural conclusion to the original Deuteronomic book of Joshua and the second, an amplification by a post-exilic Deuteronomistic redactor.

The special introduction to Judges again focuses on matters of compilation. The main portion of the book of Judges is viewed as containing narratives about the "great judges" (3:7-16:31) drawn together from sagas, heroic legends, hymns, and aetiological traditions antedating the Deuteronomistic History. This was utilized by the Deuteronomic historian to illustrate the theme of his initial historical section (2:6-19) concerning God's discipline of his people. To this redactional material drawn from various historical traditions is supplied in 1:2-21; 2:1-5; and 3:1-6, and the two concluding appendices (17-18, 19-21).

The special introduction to Ruth considers such matters as place in the canon, date (exilic; "Ruth is related to practical issues of the time of its composition, notably to the resettlement of the returning exiles, who found it not so easy to reoccupy their ancestral lands", p. 369), purpose (to air the problems of rehabilitation), composition, and literary form and sources (Ruth is basically a unified but fictional story drawn from popular saga, to which geneological additions have been appended, 4:17b, 18-22).

With such preliminary bases, it is small wonder that the ensuing commentary sections deal prominently with matters of literary criticism and offer to the reader little of value with respect to the historical trustworthiness (although the battle for Hazor [11:1-23] is a [fairly reliable] "historical tradition"—p. 113; cf. 29f.) or spiritual applicability of the books in question. At Gray's hands the crossing of the Jordan becomes "a notorious complex of repetitions, overlappings, parentheses and variant traditions, which sadly impairs the dramatic effect of the older narrative source" (p. 66); the fall of Jericho becomes the muddled compilation of secular and sacred traditions; Joshua's long day (Josh 10:12-14) is a mere poetic fragment made miraculous only by the "pre-Deuteronomistic compiler" (p. 108); the divine charge to Joshua (Josh 1:1-9) and Joshua's farewell addresses (Josh 23, 24) are Deuteronomic stylistic conventions whose purposes are introduction, recapitulation, or the marking of periodic termination; the accounts of the judges are mere traditions that are often unhistoric and even contradictory (e.g., Deborah

and Barak, pp. 253–82; cf. pp. 200–205); and Ruth becomes a late fictional tale dealing with rehabilitation and reflecting “sensitivity to the problem of the admission of alien women to the Jewish community, though this problem had not yet, we suggest, become so acute as in the time of Nehemiah and Ezra” (p. 371).

This reviewer continues to be amazed that modern adaptations of the older documentary and fragmentary theories enjoy such favor with biblical scholars in the face of a growing consensus of modern scholarship that views the biblical narrative not as an aggregate of disjointed sources but as the product of skilled authors who have composed the entire literary piece. One might note, for example recent studies by Leland Ryken, Tremper Longman, III, Robert Alter, and T. R. Hobbs. Alas, the wearisome and pervasive plague of the “Deuteronomic” grid seems so to have fallen upon OT scholarship that one can often predict the tone, direction, and end of the study done by most contemporary non-evangelical (and some evangelical) commentators before looking at the pages of their work. Further, non-evangelical scholars give no indication, with regard to the “Deuteronomic School,” of having seriously considered the incisive objections to Deuteronomistic theory by such evangelical scholars as R. K. Harrison (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 721–32), W. C. Kaiser, Jr. (*Toward an Old Testament Theology*, pp. 63–66), and K. A. Kitchen (“Ancient Orient ‘Deuteronomism,’ and the Old Testament,” in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament* [ed. J. B. Payne], pp. 1–24). It is obvious that such commentaries as this one will offer little that is of spiritual help to the evangelical community and will be rejected outright by those who hold a high view of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures.

RICHARD PATTERSON  
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*The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, by Pieter A. Verhoef. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987. Pp. xxv + 364. \$21.95. Cloth.

Verhoef’s commentary takes its place as the latest volume in Eerdmans’ prestigious The New International Commentary on the Old Testament series. The distinguished professor emeritus of the University of Stellenbosch is eminently qualified to undertake the task of writing this book, having previously authored a commentary on Malachi for the *Commentaar op het Oude Testament*. It is evident from the extensive bibliography that Verhoef is well acquainted with the secondary literature in the field, even though one would have hoped to have seen more notice of his interaction with some of the most recent archaeological and historical material relative to the period by such scholars as N. Avigad, F. M. Cross, E. Meyers, and E. Yamauchi.

The commentary to each of the two biblical books under consideration is introduced by the usual background questions and is accompanied by generous footnotes and closing indexes. As for Haggai, Verhoef contends that this sixth century B.C. prophet was not of priestly descent, that he probably originally delivered his four oracles orally and (apparently following Koole)

may have dictated his words to one or two of his disciples, and that he delivered his fourfold message concerning the self-centeredness of the populace (1:1–15a), the need for self-dedication for the task of restoring the temple (1:15b–2:9), the necessity of self-purity (2:10–19), and the need for understanding God's future program (2:20–23) in accordance with three major themes: (1) the centrality of God for all the living, (2) the communion of God with his covenant people in the temple, and (3) the culmination of God's promises in the holy war of the eschatological Lord's Day. Verhoef defends the essential unity and trustworthiness of the text of Haggai and brings together the scriptural and secular data relative to the era of the return under Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel (= two distinct people), and the high priest Joshua.

In the commentary portion Verhoef opts for the non-Messianic interpretation of 2:7. The verse is to be understood in conjunction with other texts that predict the future contributions of the nation to God's people, here specifically "as 'spoils' dedicated to the Victor in the holy war" (p. 103). He also decides for a fully eschatological interpretation of 2:20–23. "The content of 2:20–23 cannot adequately be explained from the contemporary history, but rather has its basis in the traditio-historical theme of the Day of the Lord" (p. 142). Here again the author finds the theme of holy war, in this case in order "to establish the universal and absolute rule of his own representative, Zerubbabel" (p. 143). By "Zerubbabel" is intended God's *rector designatus* (p. 148) of the Davidic line through whom God will fulfill the authority promised in the Davidic Covenant, although it is not certain that Haggai identified Zerubbabel with Messiah himself (cf. Zech 3:8; 6:9–15). "The fact remains, however, that the promises concerning Zerubbabel were an actualization of the promise that the Messiah would be a descendant from the house of David (cf. Matt. 1:6–16; Luke 3:27)" (p. 149).

As for Malachi, Verhoef decides for the position that by the name is intended a real historical person whose ministry is to be dated in the time between Nehemiah's two visits to Jerusalem (i.e., "shortly after 433 B.C.," p. 158). It was a period when the reforms effected by Nehemiah during his first visit had begun to lose their hold on the people of God (cf. Neh 13). Verhoef declares that "the canonicity of Malachi has never been disputed" (p. 171), and follows MT fully, except for minor emendations in 1:5, 2:10, and 2:16. He also follows a traditional conservative approach in deciding for the unity and authority of the book, which contains the authentic oral dialogues of the prophet. Verhoef finds the book to be written in "pure Hebrew" (p. 168) and in a statement-question-motivation schema, a style that could be favorably "compared with the vigorous dialogue of the public orator" (p. 166). Verhoef stresses the centrality of covenant for Malachi. Although the "concept of covenant in Malachi's message does not resemble the classical structure of the late second-millennium covenants, or even the varying scheme of the covenants from the first millennium" (p. 180), nevertheless, the author goes to great lengths to show that the main features of suzerainty covenantal structure are fully attested in this short book (pp. 180–84).

In the commentary section, Verhoef suggests concerning 1:6–2:9 that (1) while Malachi's attitude toward the sacrificial system was basically favorable, he also balanced cultic orthodoxy with the honor and fear of the Lord;



(2) both the mediatorial and teaching function of the priesthood are stressed; and (3) Malachi does not reflect Wellhausen's "radical" view that priests and Levites are to be distinguished from one another (pp. 255-61). He maintains that the phrase "my messenger" (3:1) is to be associated with a series of human forerunners to Messiah that culminates in John the Baptist (p. 288). As for the well-known cruces at the end of the prophecy (4:1-6—Heb 3:19-24), Verhoef affirms that Malachi's presentation of the theme of the Day of the Lord centers exclusively on the covenant people so that the crisis of that time will reveal clearly "the difference between those who fear and serve God and those who do not will be apparent" (p. 335), and that the coming Elijah (= the messenger of 3:1) both came in John the Baptist and will come again before the coming of the Day of the Lord (p. 345).

An important feature of this book is the author's emphasis on structural analysis as an exegetical method. Because Verhoef lays great stress on the prophet's message as God's objectively verifiable revelation (p. 33), he does not appear to intend the full epistemology of the structuralist system whereby a given text's form takes precedence over its substance and its truth inheres not in the author's intent but in the deep structures of the human mind. Rather, Verhoef's interest lies in methodology in particular, and especially, the literary unit. He suggests that for Haggai "the literary unit in the book is not the stich or colon but the sentence" (p. 20); for Malachi, it "concerns mainly the division of the book into pericopes, the analysis of sentences (prose), stichoi (poetry), and discourses, and a consideration of various literary devices" (p. 171). It would seem to this reviewer that the author might have coined a better term for his hermeneutical method, outlined it more graphically, and wedded the fruits of his analysis more consistently and clearly to the individual segments in the book. Indeed, if "structural analysis" provides the key to understanding these prophetic books, the reader needs to be able to follow along with Verhoef as he divulges the books' theme and development. Many of his other comments could then have been relegated to a section of "additional comments" for each literary unit.

This basic criticism of method and format aside, it is refreshing to note that in this commentary on these two often neglected biblical prophets, one has at his disposal a book that shows thorough and careful research, and that proceeds with a high regard for the biblical text. Because of its conservative position, the book will doubtless be warmly welcomed by Bible students and pastors in the evangelical community.

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*Interpreting Acts: The Expanding Church*, by Everett F. Harrison. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986. Pp. 482. \$14.95. Paper.

What is the unique contribution of The Acts to the canon of Scripture? How does the book relate to the Gospels and to remaining New Testament literature? What specific insights into New Testament theology does this book



give us? Everett F. Harrison brings light to bear on these and many other questions in this revised and expanded version of his original volume, *Acts: The Expanding Church*.

"My purpose in writing this commentary," states Harrison, "has been to deal adequately, though not exhaustively, with the Book of Acts. Critical problems have not been overlooked, nor have practical applications been entirely avoided; but the main thrust has been to discern the meaning of the text" (Preface). Those readers who are looking for a straightforward exposition of the Book of Acts will find it here. Without getting bogged down in technical detail, the author makes skillful use of footnotes to help the reader pursue further study in areas of interest.

In the "Introductory Matters" the author gives particular attention to the book's historical worth. Luke is the only New Testament writer who can be called a historian. The book serves as a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles. The historical narrative displays authenticity and accuracy. Harrison quotes Sherwin-White as saying, "For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming . . . any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted" (p. 29).

Four "Parts" serve as the organizational structure of the commentary. A brief summary prefaces each "Part" that enables the reader to follow the development of the succeeding commentary. These "Parts" follow the historical and geographical flow of the text: The Church at Jerusalem, 1:1-8:3; The Church in Judea, Samaria, and Syria, 8:4-12:25; The Church in Asia Minor and Europe, 13:1-19:41; and The Witness of Paul the Prisoner, 20:1-28:31.

To conclude his commentary, Harrison adds a unique section on the "Theological Emphases" in Acts. The theological loci discussed are God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, natural revelation, miracles, the Word, sin, salvation (including sin, repentance, gospel, faith, confession, and baptism), the Church, prayer, angels and the kingdom of God.

This commentary is particularly helpful to pastors who are doing expositional studies in Acts and to teachers of Bible analysis courses in the local church, college, or seminary.

PAUL A. BEALS

GRAND RAPIDS BAPTIST SEMINARY

*Demon Possession and the Christian: A New Perspective*, by C. Fred Dickason. Chicago: Moody, 1987. Pp. 355. \$10.95. Paper.

Dr. Dickason has written an exhaustive analysis of the biblical material that addresses the interaction of demons with mankind. He gives special attention to the warfare of the believer and the extent to which this warfare involves demonic activity. This book is a sequel to his popular college textbook, *Angels: Elect and Evil* published by Moody Press in 1975. Amazingly, the hypothesis that makes the recent book controversial is presented in

his 1975 effort, (namely, that believers can be controlled by demons as demonstrated by experience).

The first section deals with exegetical considerations. The term "Demonization" (with the emphasis on control) is preferred over "Demon Possession" (which implies ownership). It is suggested that a believer can be possessed (owned) by God but controlled (filled) by demons. The author concludes that the exegetical material is insufficient to decide the issue: "The Bible does not evidence that believers cannot be demonized. Thus, we are left to look for other types of evidence that may contribute to answering our question: Can genuine believers be demonized?" (p. 127).

The second section deals with theological considerations. Dickason reasons that since demonization does not involve ownership, "demon possession" is no different theologically than when a believer falls into sin. The Holy Spirit of God is already in proximity to the imperfect human nature, so it should not be unreasonable have a demon there as well. It is suggested that God would allow demon infestation for a variety of reasons such as chastisement for sin in general, seeking occult power or miraculous gifts of the Spirit (e.g., tongues). The author concludes that theological considerations do not rule out the possibility of a believer being demon possessed (p. 147).

This brings us to the third section which deals with "clinical considerations". Here the author relates the counseling experiences of several Christian counselors plus his own 400+ conversations with the demons possessing believers. In the absence of clear direction from the Bible it is suggested that experience must determine the truth: "Having researched the evidence in broad fashion by proper application of both biblical and clinical parameters, we may come to the valid conclusion that Christians can be demonized" (p. 157). This idea is epistemologically dangerous and will be roundly condemned by presuppositionalists. Dickason anticipates the response and hastens to say that his teaching is not "doctrine", but he certainly argues forcefully for his belief.

Dickason tries to draw an analogy between demon possession and cancer. If a Christian can get cancer (an item not addressed in scripture but confirmed through "clinical evidence" [p. 157]), then it stands to reason that clinical considerations should be allowed as admissible evidence in the absence of a clear statement in scripture about Demon Possessed Christians. On page 156 he strongly states:

We can see that if biblically and clinically it has been established that genuine believers may have cancer and some still preach that Christians cannot, they are fair to neither the biblical or clinical evidence; nor are they fair to those Christians suffering with cancer. In fact, they have added greatly to their distress. They may have played into demonic hands in that they accuse and judge the brethren. Such erroneous teaching is unconscionable! Such persons must sweep aside their prejudices and concern for their reputations. They must consider the fact as they are, admit their ignorance, confess their improper and false teaching, and turn to help the afflicted Christians with openness of mind and concern of heart.

The use of cancer as an illustration of demon possession is not entirely analogous. Cancer is an amoral result of the fall of man. It is neither

rationally nor personally evil. Demons are rational creatures and actively immoral. God may allow the amoral cancer to take His child home to glory; but is it necessarily logical to say He would also allow a foul creature to infest the "fetus" of a developing son of God? There is no warning about cancer in the Bible, but everything that is needed for "life and godliness" *has* been revealed in scripture (2 Pet 1:3). Certainly we would have been explicitly warned about demon possession if it is a problem for the believer's spiritual life.

Anticipating the outcry against using experience to justify his position, the author scatters qualifying phrases and disclaimers throughout the text. For instance, the clinical experts that he draws from are invariably introduced with a complimentary adjective: "trusted and approves" (p. 285), "trustworthy" (p. 182), "sterling reputation" (p. 179). He frequently proclaims the authority and power of scripture but calls for "openness of mind" (p. 129), "objectivity in approaching this vital issue" (p. 79), "fair evaluation" (p. 129), "sincere truth seekers" (p. 170), and the "boldness required in an established scholarly community" (p. 171).

Dickason relates the various ways that believers can be possessed. In one case, a girl's aunt was involved in a seance (p. 12). Those involved in occultic experimentation, the cults or any false religions are open to demonic attack (p. 28). God can send a demon to chastise a believer (p. 140). Demons can enter when a person wrongly seeks to speak in tongues or to receive the gift of prophecy (p. 142). Demons can be transferred by the laying on of hands to receive the gift of tongues (p. 163). One demon told Dickason that he entered the victim "because he did not surrender his life completely" (p. 177). Those who have areas of their lives not fully under God's control invite demon interest (p. 192). Those who were molested sexually as a child or played the child's game of "doctor and patient" are susceptible (pp. 212, 286). Even inanimate objects such as "friendship bracelets" can bring demons (p. 251). On page 252 there is a stern warning:

It is naive and dangerous for churches to display a collection of idolatrous items, such as carved gods, religious masks, gemstone figures, war spears, etc. These have all been dedicated to heathen gods, and demons use them as centers of influence. If a persona hesitates to destroy such things, they become a point of contention between the person's will and God's.

This dire warning seems to fly in the face of Paul's comments to the Corinthians about the irrelevance of whether or not meat has been offered to idols (1 Cor 10:23-33).

In his experience, the author claims that 95% of all demonized Christians are a result of ancestral involvement in fulfillment of the curse of Exodus 20:4-5 (p. 162). Therefore, in a few of his case histories lovely Christians who long to live for God and have vibrant devotional lives but nevertheless are demon possessed due to ancestral involvement are cited. At this point it is most disappointing to see that it takes a counselor with special knowledge of demons to help the bewildered believer (pp. 180, 204, 227, 266 and 313). It is claimed that once a believer has been rid of demons he need not fear a return as long as he walks with the Lord (p. 99).

Dickason's application of Exodus 20:4-5 is suspect. It is highly irregular for God actively to afflict a sincere and spiritual believer with an obscure and mystical curse.

In the course of relating his conversations with the demons of possessed believers, the following clinical techniques are mentioned. Upon suspecting the presence of a demon in the counselee, the counselor should ask for permission to address the inhabiting demon (p. 197). This is done in name of Christ, and in some cases must be repeated and done emphatically since the demons will try to hide their presence (p. 164). A conversation with the demon speaking through the counselee will then ensue. Argumentation and challenges from the demon should be expected (p. 200). Anything not pleasing to the counselor can be stopped by command to the demon (i.e., if the demon curses, speaks in tongues, causes the person to cry or move the limbs) (p. 201). The process can be long (one two-hour session is reported) or immediately successful (stubborn demons refuse to leave because they are "too deep and strong" or successfully hide while others are exposed and cast out) (pp. 181, 186). It is further suggested that once one demon has agreed to leave, the counselor should probe for residual demons (p. 182). It is important to identify the highest ranking demon and "bind" all other inhabiting demons to him so they can all be dismissed at the same time (p. 186). If the demons won't talk but the counselee can sense their thoughts, the counselee can relay what the demons are thinking, which is called the "Relaying the Thought Method" (p. 184).

Scripture teaches that by resisting the suggestions of evil from Satan, the believer will be victorious over those temptations. When men suggest that the authority to exorcise demons the way Jesus and the disciples did (p. 256) is reproducible, they are wrong. Demon exorcism was one of the sign miracles which passed with the Apostolic period. The analogy of healing through prayer is not pertinent (p. 263) since there is no biblical guarantee of healing through prayer even in the Apostolic period.

"The Devil Made Me Do It" is a comforting thought to a sinner struggling with a load of guilt. Others could take comfort in thinking, "My pet sin must not be so bad since it hasn't opened my life to demon harassment." To imply that ministers of God are heartless in exposing and condemning sin is unbiblical (p. 156).

Dickason mentions the names of some of the demons he has encountered: "Suicide," "Despair," "Death-Despair," "Resentment," "Tongues Spirit," "Non-Acceptance," "Pride," "Confusion," "Leading Defeated Throne," "The Majestic One," "Weakness," "Control," "Fear," and "Epilepsy" (pp. 185, 189, 193, 200, 226, 227, 238, 240, 283). In his experience he has even talked to a female demon (p. 192).

At some point in the counseling process it is important to break any former pacts with the devil and renounce all ancestral demons (pp. 193, 290). There is mention of a pre-printed declaration for the counselee to sign and bibliographic suggestions for sample prayers that have proved helpful in fighting demons (p. 255). It is suggested that hymns be played for background music during sessions (p. 193). A stubborn demon should be asked for his "ground" for staying. This will reveal the weakness or sin of the counselee

(p. 194). Demons should be forced to vocalize their defeat both by Christ and also the counselee (p. 196). They should be sent to "the place where Jesus sent demons" or "the pit." In fact, they should be forced to personally invite the Holy Angels to escort them to the pit (p. 196).

Dickason has discovered that demons don't like to be taped (p. 198). He claims they dislike the person they inhabit, the indwelling Jesus and the Christian counselor (p. 199). Demons will argue, fuss and tell half-truths (p. 200). They will even make grammatical mistakes in their excitement (p. 204). In one particularly difficult case, a depressed pastor was not possessed, but every morning at 3:00 A.M. his wife's demon would come over to feed him troubling thoughts (p. 207).

Dickason is sensitive to the charge that he is violating the prohibitions against spiritism by talking with demons. He points out that he is doing what Jesus did and does not seek information in the process. However, while dealing with the demons, interesting information "leaks out." He therefore is able to relay *extra-biblical* information about demons.

"In one counseling session with Alice, I asked the demon called Non-Acceptance if he had used the concept that Christians cannot be inhabited by demons. He replied, 'Oh, yes! We use it all the time. It is one of the best tools we have ever promoted.'" (p. 191).

On page 203 a demon says, "Yes, and how can a wicked spirit live inside a temple of God? Ha, ha! They can't figure it out. They can't figure it out! But we know, we know, we know . . . That's what confuses them. We're going to keep them confused!"

Another demon admits that he controls people through electrical and chemical changes in the brain. "We have power in that," was his confession. Dickason then says, "Again we do not take such as scientific evidence, but his confirmation of controlling the mind through the brain must be considered. Why would he give away such damaging information except he were under pressure from the Lord" (p. 224).

In this reviewer's opinion, it is a grave error to assume that we can "outsmart" Satan. Satan is the "Father of Lies" and certainly is smart enough to manipulate even evangelical scholars who stray from the path of the revealed Word of God.

Dickason has written a thorough book on the subject of demon possession. He has anticipated and addressed many conceivable objections to his thesis. Having acknowledge a difference between his ministry and the exorcisms of the New Testament, he considers himself to be immune from the criticism that he is usurping an apostolic gift (p. 309). He even warns against emphasizing exorcism to the detriment of a well-rounded ministry (p. 326). He does not, however, provide any exegetical limits on Satan's activities. Logically, that means the Christian Counselor would have to consider demon possession in every case. As more counselors take Dickason's view, there will be more talk of demon possession and more aggressive tactics to identify and exorcise demons. Counselees will be subliminally conditioned to expect demon possession and whole congregations titillated with sensational stories of deliverance. Eventually, while not claiming the sign gift of exorcism, the 20th Century pastor will place more emphasis on exorcism than Christ and the



Apostles ever did. In the process, Satan becomes the center of attention and the church is hurt by the diversion.

In the gospels, demon possession was not secretive; but in every case recognized by all, including the unsaved. The Bible does not warn of secretive possession that can only be recognized and handled by a specialist. There is no mention of probing for the presence of demons. The Bible does not record or encourage extended conversations between believers and the enemy. There is no implication that arguing with a demon is the proper method of dealing with a sin problem. The Bible strictly condemns attempts to contact the spirit world and rejects all extra-biblical revelation. Deuteronomy 18:9–22 is particularly helpful on this last point because verses 9–12 condemn trafficking with the spirit world. Verses 14–22 give the reason: rather than seeking information from demons, the child of God is to rely solely on the information provided by God through His prophets. Dickason claims to be discrete in his talks with the demons, but reports having extracted extrabiblical information from the demons that verifies his hypothesis (pp. 191, 203, 224).

The Epistles do not warn us of demon possession. Dickason dismisses this as a “weak argument from silence” (p. 307). Those who deny the demon possession of Christians are accused of accepting external spiritual warfare and excluding internal (mind control) ware (p. 308). Internal attack does not, however, prove Dickason’s hypothesis. The issue for the believer is not how or where Satan attacks, but how to counterattack. The classical orthodox position is to ask God for victory over Satan. Dickason wants to go a step further and speak directly with the demons.

2 Peter 1:3 tells us that everything we need to know for life and godliness is presented in scripture. Therefore, it is *not* a weak argument from silence to point out that exorcism and demon possession are missing from the church epistles. There are many verses on the warfare of the believer in the epistles. Dickason runs them through his demon possession grid, trying to demonstrate that the epistles do address the subject. But, exegetically, none of the verses *demand* demon possession nor (more importantly) ritualistic, professional expulsion. Furthermore, there is no plausible reason why God would be so elusive on the subject of casting out demons if He intended us to do so.

The pattern for spiritual warfare presented in the epistles is: 1) recognize that Satan is behind temptation and false doctrine (1 Tim 3:7, 4:1), 2) flee youthful lusts (2 Tim 2:22) and 3) stand against Satan through the power of prayer (Eph 6:18). The emphasis is on personal responsibility to overcome sin by asking God for the victory (1 Jn 5:4), not by verbal arguments with demons.

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*Five Views on Sanctification*, by Melvin E. Dieter, Anthony A. Hoekema, Stanley M. Horton, J. Robertson McQuilkin, and John F. Walvoord. Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Akademie, 1987. 254 pp. \$9.95. Paper.

This helpful volume follows a format in which each contributor not only presents a chapter on his own view but also responds briefly to the other



views. This feature, followed in a few other works which come to mind, allows the reader to see the key points of tension between the various views. The chapters average about 30 pages, while the responses are usually 2-3 pages. The main views included in the book are Wesleyan (Dieter, Asbury Seminary), Reformed (Hoekema, Calvin Seminary), Pentecostal (Horton, Assemblies of God Seminary), Keswick (McQuilkin, Columbia Graduate School), and Augustinian-Dispensational (Walvoord, Dallas Seminary). The book concludes with endnotes and indexes of subjects and Scripture. The contributors face both agreements and disagreements honestly, though in an irenic manner which is commendable. The publisher's comment on the back cover is accurate: "Without surrendering distinctions and distinctives, the authors find more common ground than might be expected." In the following, I will attempt to highlight distinctives, not common ground. The reader will note that more often than not, my sympathies are with Hoekema.

Dieter's essay on the Wesleyan view naturally begins with a summary of Wesley's teaching on entire sanctification or perfect love, typically appropriated "in a distinct crisis of faith sometime subsequent to justification," resulting in "total death to sin and an entire renewal in the image of God" (p. 18). Remaining sections of the essay handle the theological milieu, the biblical milieu, and doctrinal developments subsequent to Wesley. Among Dieter's respondents, Horton largely expresses agreement with the Wesleyan view, mentioning only the Pentecostal nuance that baptism with the Holy Spirit is "an empowering experience, not an act of entire sanctification" (p. 51). McQuilkin's response raises some legitimate concerns about ambiguities, and doubts Wesleyanism's emphasis on a sanctifying crisis experience subsequent to regeneration. Nevertheless, Keswick agrees with Wesleyanism that "every Spirit-empowered believer may consistently refrain from deliberately violating God's known will" (p. 55). Walvoord's brief response finds greater problems with the excesses of some of Wesley's successors than with Wesley himself. Significantly, Walvoord agrees with Wesley that subsequent to initial salvation "there is normally a later act of the will in which individuals surrender their life to the will of God" (p. 57). Hoekema's response is the most negative of the four, centering in a brief refutation of entire sanctification which concludes that "we are *genuinely* new but not yet *totally* new" (p. 49). Thus after the first exchange of the book, the reader may note a degree of mutual sympathy between Dieter, Horton, McQuilkin, and Walvoord which is not shared by Hoekema. The crux seems to be the normativeness of a special post-conversion experience which results in entire sanctification (Dieter), empowering (Horton), refraining from deliberate sin (McQuilkin), or surrendering one's life to God's will (Walvoord). Hoekema alone seems to debunk such teaching.

The Reformed perspective articulated next by Hoekema stresses both "definitive" and "progressive" sanctification (p. 72f.). Definitive sanctification occurs at conversion and functions as the "already," objective, indicative foundation for the subsequent, "not yet," subjective, imperative superstructure of the progressive aspect. Key texts are Romans 6, Ephesians 4, and Colossians 3. Hoekema goes on to argue in agreement with John Murray that the believer is not simultaneously both an "old man" and a "new man." Rather, these terms refer holistically to the pre- and post-conversion individual

(p. 78f.) Subsequent sections of the essay critique perfectionism, articulate God's law as a means of sanctification, and present the proximate and ultimate goals of sanctification. Dieter's response first attempts to distance Hoekema's approach from traditional Calvinism and then to distance Wesleyanism from perfectionism. He maintains that Christian perfection is limited by one's bodily corruption and by the sinfulness of the world, but not by an abiding inner "bent to sinning" (p. 93). Horton likewise finds Hoekema's approach preferable to what he has seen previously in Calvinistic circles. He has few problems with Hoekema's essay but does register a desire for more emphasis on the empowering of the Holy Spirit. McQuilkin agrees substantially with every major point made by Hoekema but believes that Hoekema has failed to address the problem of the defeated or "carnal" Christian. In place of Hoekema's "inevitable continuum from regeneration to glorification" (p. 98), he hints at a crisis renewal which results in a qualitatively superior way of living the Christian life. Walvoord's "traditional Augustinian-Dispensational perspective" registers concern with Hoekema's "old man"/"new man" articulation, with his positive view of the law in the Christian life, with his view of Rom 7:14-25, and with his omission of "the filling of the Holy Spirit . . . the secret of sanctification" (p. 101). But this is precisely the crucial issue! Hoekema appears to deny the normativeness of a definitive sanctification experience "separate from or subsequent to justification" (p. 75). The other four views presented in this volume encourage believers to seek *some* sort of subsequent experience.

Horton's Pentecostal perspective traces the roots of the movement back to 1901 and chronicles controversies among various Pentecostal groups. He then presents the teaching of the Assemblies of God on sanctification and baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is safe to say that Horton's respondents have difficulty chiefly with this last section on baptism in the Holy Spirit. Dieter rather mildly wishes that the Assemblies' teaching on entire sanctification would be less eclectic and more thoroughly Wesleyan. Walvoord's generous (to a fault?) response is concerned with the experience-centered excesses of some Pentecostal sects which he finds to be largely corrected in Horton's essay. He is still concerned, however, with Horton's confusion of the Spirit's baptism and filling. McQuilkin's comments more rigorously critique the baptism of the Spirit issue but also address the question of the necessity for a second crisis experience. Thus the central issue is whether the Spirit baptism texts in the gospels and Acts describe the same reality as that of 1 Cor 12:13. For Horton, the baptisms are distinct, with the gospels-Acts texts describing empowerment for service, not incorporation into the body of Christ. However, the syntax of all the passages involves ἐν πνεύματι. 1 Cor 12:13 and Acts 1:5 differ from the other texts in that they utilize passive (Divine, or "semitic"?) verbs. In all the texts ἐν πνεύματι is the sphere of the believer's experience as the exalted, ascended Messiah dispenses the Spirit to the Church. The texts with passive verbs express Christ's agency implicitly if not explicitly; they cannot be made to express a different agent (the Spirit) and thus a different reality. Here McQuilkin and Hoekema are rightly suspicious (pp. 142-43).

McQuilkin's essay presents Keswick teaching as an interdenominational solution to the problem of subnormal Christian living. Keswick conferences have traditionally emphasized sin, God's provision, consecration, filling with the Spirit, and service. Briefly alluding to areas of ambiguity among Keswick teachers ("able not to sin," "the old nature"), McQuilkin hastens on to expound in detail the solution (faith) to the problem (unbelief) of subnormal Christian experience. Faith appropriating the Christian's union with Christ is the center of Keswick teaching. No doubt this is an appropriate emphasis. However, McQuilkin now seems to assume a post-conversion crisis appropriation of union with Christ, a position he earlier doubted (pp. 144, 171). Dieter's response traces the historical connections of Keswick and concludes that its vision of Christian holiness is closer to Wesleyanism than any of the other positions articulated in the book (p. 184). Horton likewise notes more similarities than differences between Keswick teaching and Pentecostalism. He does point out that the Keswick position is generally more Calvinistic and that its view of Spirit-filling for maturity differs from Pentecostalism's emphasis upon empowering. Apart from minor quibbles, Walvoord also finds little with which to take issue in McQuilkin's presentation. Only Hoekema raises substantive questions in two areas. He first questions the biblical accuracy of the Keswick tenet of uniform sustained victory over known sin (p. 188). Second, he doubts the biblical and experiential basis of McQuilkin's rather strong distinction between two types of Christians: subnormal, defeated, carnal ones and normal, victorious, spiritual ones. Here once again surfaces what is perhaps the central issue of the book: Is there a higher plane of Christian living to be sought through a post-conversion crisis experience, or is the normal Christian life a continuum of progressive spiritual renewal? Of the various contributors to this volume, only Hoekema would hold the latter option.

The final exchange of the book is prompted by Walvoord's "Augustinian-Dispensational" perspective. While the advisability of this term is dubious, Walvoord does seek to work out a theology of sanctification in continuity with both Augustine and the Dallas Seminary strain of dispensationalism. Emphasis falls upon a sharp distinction between the once for all baptism of the Spirit and a repeated filling of the Spirit. Dieter concludes that Walvoord's teaching on the filling of the Spirit is "very close" to Wesleyanism and that it would be accepted by most Wesleyans (p. 228). Horton notes the influence of dispensationalism on Pentecostalism but points out basic disagreements on the baptism of the Spirit. McQuilkin briefly quibbles about Walvoord's "two-nature theory" of the Christian life but concludes that Walvoord's view "is in harmony with the Keswick approach" (p. 237). Hoekema once again surfaces a major problem: he believes that Walvoord's view "fails to do justice to the fact that a decisive break with sin was brought about by Christ for believers" (p. 231). Of course, for Walvoord the truly decisive break comes with subsequent fillings of the Spirit, not with original regeneration. Here Hoekema once again shows his view to be quite distinct from the other four views.

To conclude this lengthy review, a synthesis will be attempted. Throughout the book, Hoekema's view repeatedly appears to be distinct from the

others in that he has no place for a decisive post-conversion crisis experience(s) which provides the dynamic for sanctification. Instead, Hoekema, with Calvin, Warfield, and Murray, posits God's act of regeneration as the decisive or "definitive" break with sin, the dynamic of sanctification. Though the terminology of Dieter, Horton, McQuilkin, and Walvoord differs somewhat, all of them teach the necessity of reaching some sort of higher plane of Christian living through decisive post-conversion experience(s). There is no real distinction between Walvoord's teaching and Keswick teaching, and both Dieter and Horton claim that their distinctive views also have great affinities with Keswick. Thus, there may only be *two* views of sanctification presented in this volume.

Here it is instructive to note Walvoord's and McQuilkin's attempts (pp. 223-24; 245, n. 8) to mediate their respective views in reference to B. B. Warfield's critiques in the *Princeton Theological Review*. Walvoord argues that Warfield did not sufficiently stress human responsibility in his critique of Chafer's *He That is Spiritual*. But then Walvoord inconsistently concludes his chapter with the following one-sided comment, "sanctification is the work of God for human beings rather than their work for Him" (p. 226). McQuilkin similarly maintains that Keswick's critics have not understood its teaching (p. 183). He even alludes to an interchange between his father and Warfield, after which Warfield, having better understood Keswick teaching, said "If I had known these things, I would not have included the last chapter in my work" (p. 245, no. 8). But something is amiss here, since Warfield's critique was published in *Princeton Theological Review* in 1918. After his death in 1921, his will provided for the publication of his critical reviews in book form, which occurred in 1932. Thus Warfield seemingly could not have referred to retracting this last chapter of his book—he had been dead eleven years when it was published. Perhaps this anachronism could be clarified.

As a dispensationalist, I frankly question whether there is such a thing as a distinctively dispensational view of sanctification. Hoekema's approach seems to articulate best the already/not yet, indicative/imperative tension of New Testament inaugurated eschatology. However, none of the authors in this volume provide a sustained exposition of what is probably the crucial passage, Romans 6-8. Nevertheless, this book will be helpful to all who wish to study the doctrine of sanctification seriously.

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*Election and Predestination*, by Paul K. Jewett. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985. Pp. xii + 147. \$8.95. Paper.

The subject of election and predestination has been a source for debate since the early church. The believing community has not been satisfied to opt for Augustine or Pelagius, Luther or Erasmus, Calvin or Arminius or the numerous moderating positions that have been developed over the centuries. Jewett's contribution will not bring a final answer to the subject either, but it

will clarify the issues for contemporary readers. The treatment is well balanced, irenic and very readable. Jewett is honest in identifying his commitment to the Augustinian-Calvinist side of the debate from the beginning. This approach is balanced by Grounds' foreword which treats the subject from the semi-Arminian side of the question.

Jewett's work begins with a useful survey of the historical material in which he carefully traces the various positions and the setting in which the debates took place. He sees more continuity than discontinuity in the Reformed tradition than has been seen by recent scholars (contra R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, Oxford, 1980). All readers will find helpful material in this section. Especially informative is his treatment of 20th century theology. His treatment of Barth's position on election is perhaps the finest analysis on the subject that I have read.

The next section of the book deals with the exegetical questions related to election and predestination. Jewett moves easily from historical concerns to biblical exegesis. Especially helpful in this section is the exposition on God's covenant faithfulness. Jewett's covenant theology is readily apparent as he traces the covenant people of God from the descendants of Abraham through the NT community, whether Jew or Gentile.

Jewett tackles the tough questions relating to individual or corporate election. Jewett opts for individual election as the biblical teaching on this difficult question. He rightly refutes Karl Barth's unscriptural corporate concept of election which leads to universalism. For this, Jewett is to be commended. Jewett wrestles with the decrees of God and helps the reader work through the differences between supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism. He notes the impressive logic of supralapsarianism, but concludes that such a position is not without its ethical problems. It is helpful at this point to be reminded that God's decrees are not the cause of an event. Jewett opts for a balanced infralapsarianism that affirms unconditional election and rejects unconditional reprobation.

Jewett's work is worthy of much praise and deserving of a wide readership by those who agree and disagree with him. For those wrestling with this issue, Jewett will prove to be profitable reading. He has helped the believing community reaffirm that salvation is of God and is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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*Easter in Ordinary: Reflections of Human Experience and the Knowledge of God*, by Nicholas Lash. Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1988. Pp. 304. \$29.95. Cloth.

This work by the present Norris—Hulse professor of divinity at Cambridge University has as its basis the prestigious Richards Lectures at the University of Virginia, Fall 1986. Professor Lash has had a long standing concern for a proper portrayal of the relationship between human existence



and the mystery of God. In this significant work of theological reflection he apparently brings to final clarification his criticisms of dominant, philosophical/metaphysical perspectives, alternative ways of seeing (and therefore living, before God) and constructive theological expression of the relation between God and man in the course of historical existence.

Modern man's potential loss of himself, whether from the threat of technology, the reductionism of philosophical materialism, or nuclear annihilation, has forced him generally to respond by some form of dualism. Few will deny that we, along with all we see about us, are products. We are products of biological, economic, political, psychological, etc., factors and relationships within the complex network of the world. But, notes Lash, our protest begins when it is asserted that this is all that we are. We refuse the designation mere products. Such is to discount that which we deem precious and unique to our humanity, our inherent personhood. It is to write off the "spiritual" element. Therefore, what has become the dominant "safeguard" for the integrity of the human person is the postulation of man as constituted of two separate elements: the physical and the mental, matter and spirit.

This perspective, one almost taken for granted at both the popular and academic levels, is one which, according to Lash, inevitably distorts mankind, his culture, and his understanding and response to God, especially in what we deem to be "religious experience." In critiquing this dualistic tendency Lash desires to uncover the fact that any special experience of God is not necessarily and specifically "religious" in its character, nor are such "religious" experiences necessarily of God in any true or privileged sense.

In order to come at this question effectively, Lash comes at the dualistic tradition of religious experience, not directly through the Cartesian *ego* (the real, inner me), but through that influential modern exponent William James. James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience* reflects the author's dualism and anti-scientism by concluding that "religious experience" is to be classified as a *mental* fact (as opposed to physical). "Religious experience is to be located within the guarded domain of inner safety, the subjective "in here." All external forms of religion, whether intellectual, institutional or ritual, are secondary at best.

Lash has no difficulty with James' emphasis on experience or his attempt at scientific description. For Lash, the basic difficulties with James' account arise when he identifies the "personal" with the "individual." When he insists that "individual" experience is a matter of inner "feeling" in contrast to thought and external inter-activities, and depreciates the intellectual and institutional aspects of religion, Lash takes exception. No one simply feels or simply thinks, etc., and the hardening of distinctions into dichotomies ends up undervaluing and underestimating the "public" aspect of human experience. The reality, notes Lash, is the ever present possibility to seek and engage, critically and responsibly, in the world and thereby transform its structures. It is to make of the world the form and content of personal experience.

But Lash pushes James and the dualistic tradition further. From James' account of religious experience, Lash asks what kind of God is apprehended thereby? Is not wanting to classify the apprehension of God merely within the



intellectual (mental) side of the boundary, James is trapped into calling such experience "quasi-sensible realities." In this way God has become a "sensed" thing among other things and not the God of classical Christian theology. Had he, in fact, opted for the mental side, as much Western thought has done, James would have made God a kind of mental fact, an idea. In following this line of thought, religious experience has come very close to occult methods and forms. Lash's point is that the God of religious experience as emanating from the currently dominant dualisms is either an idea or a ghost.

What is the way out? The dualistic tendencies to harden distinctions into dichotomies inevitably malforms the religious understanding of man, of God and of the redemptive relationship between them in all aspects of life and daily living. We must risk "coming out," risk acknowledging the whole of life, its pain, its uncontrollable and unharmonious diversity, its irreducibility in event and language and experience. The "truly personal" cannot be restricted to one aspect of human experience.

After criticizing James and dualism, Lash moves to the affirmative and what can be termed the pedagogy of the personal. Rather than defining experience inwardly as a "conscious mental going on," Lash points approvingly to Friedrich von Hügel's definition of experience as made up of "endless contacts, friendly/hostile, give/take, between ourselves and the objects of all kinds which act upon us/upon which we act in some degree or way." Von Hügel refuses to isolate one feature of our experience as though it were the center of either human experience in general or of our relationship to the mystery of God. Of particular significance for Lash, is von Hügel's understanding of the "person" not as that which we inwardly *are* but, in and through *all* of human experience, what we are *becoming*. In the tensions of life, destructive and constructive, we are in the process of the production of the personal. This is the vision of Christianity, for von Hügel, a vision that promises eventual achievement by the ever present grace of God in all human experience.

With von Hügel (and John Henry Newman), Lash also engages Martin Buber as a perspectival conversation partner. Buber's critique of the public-personal dualism that has arisen within the technocratic and bureaucratic structures of modern life is likewise to emphasize a turning of the whole unified self out for active redemptive transformation of surrounding structures.

The Christian faith then is a life of dependence on God, a dependence wherein lies our freedom. In recognizing our creatureliness and dependence on God we live in responsible relationship with each other, other things and with God. Christianity as the "school for the production of the personal" fosters sonship and dependent relatedness in the whole of the human.

This schema leads Lash to conclude his argumentation with a constructive theological description of the Christian experience of God as Triune. The Christian's recognition of his/her own creatureliness, dependence and finitude, and the continual interactive experience of such, leads to the experience of God, not in the esoteric and unusual, but within the limits of the ordinary. It is to experience God as Spirit in the beauty, creativity, love, generosity and vitality of life. But *only* this would be pantheism. It is to experience God in

the recognition of death, chaos, in the perishing of beauty, the unexplainable. It is thus to recognize the utter transcendence and incomprehensibility of God. Yet His absolute qualitative difference *alone* would leave us in agnosticism. But we are reminded that the silence of agnosticism has been broken by a Word once spoken, Word made flesh. He lived and died. He was more than prophet. He was one of eternal and imperishable meaning. It was the divine Christ. But to stop here would be to ascribe absolute significance to the past. So on we go in the dynamic "dance" of Christian pedagogy, never stopping at one point as though it were the all. Finally, says Lash, it is in the stillness of God's unity that all elements are at last reconciled and in our sharing of His stillness there is our peace.

In this work, Nicholas Lash has amply laid open a critical problem in modern, and notably evangelical, views of the Christian life that tend to accentuate the inner to the depreciation of the God ordained whole—the thrilling and extraordinary to the detriment of any recognition of God's intimate relation to the everyday. In my estimation Lash's criticisms are largely true and to the point. In a secondary way, Lash's dialogue partner, William James, while effectively diagnosed, was (as Lash admits in places) caricatured. This tendency toward a caricature-for-emphasis method in Lash does detract at points from his argument, especially where he heavily lands on words and phrases not meant to carry much baggage.

My main complaint regarding *Easter in Ordinary* is its exceedingly dominant phenomenological approach. This descriptive "theology from below" approach tends to set forth a God of strongly pantheistic tendencies despite all of Lash's trinitarian protests to the contrary. If all of life is in some sense a reflection of the imminent "Holy," then all of the real distinctions, which Lash is wont to make, in worship, ethics, etc., are erased. In point of fact Lash's closing trinitarian construction arising from human experience seems quite Hegelian. But it is a Hegelianism as filtered through Karl Rahner with lapses into Schleiermacherian "dependence on the all." As Karl Barth has noted, "... there is at least the threat of the unfortunate transition from a divine determining to a human determination . . . the human determination, the experience and attitude of the knowing subject are made the criterion of theological knowledge" (CD, I, 1, p. 19).

Still, this is an important book and ought to be read with keen interest as well as with criticism.

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*Understanding Dispensationalists*, by Vern S. Poythress. Grand Rapids: Academie/Zondervan, 1987. Pp. 137. \$7.95. Paper.

The purpose of this book is nicely stated in the title of the first chapter: "Getting Dispensationalists and Nondispensationalists to Listen to Each Other." Poythress, Professor of NT Interpretation at Westminster Theological Seminary, wishes to explore ways of profitable dialogue between dispensationalism and covenant theology. He writes as a covenant theologian who

is willing to accept some of dispensationalism's insights. Yet he poses some searching questions for dispensationalists as he pursues his quest to understand them more accurately.

The book includes fourteen short chapters. The first chapter, already alluded to, seeks mutual understanding between dispensationalists and covenant theologians. The next two chapters trace dispensationalism's historical roots and developments beyond Scofield. Covenant theology's development is explained in chapter four, which is the second longest chapter in the book. The complexity of the issues and the impossibility of simple refutations are outlined in the ensuing chapter. Next comes strategy for dialogue and a presentation of the last trumpet in 1 Cor 15:51-53 as a problem for dispensationalism, at least for its standard pretribulational form. Various issues centering around the nature of "literal interpretation" are explored in the next four chapters. The author's several technical essays on hermeneutical themes are evidently the basis for these chapters, especially chapter ten, "Interpretive Viewpoint in OT Israel," the longest chapter in the book. Two chapters on the nature of prophetic fulfillment follow, emphasizing Heb 12:22-24 and the fulfillment of Israel in Christ respectively. The book concludes with a listing of other areas which might be explored and a five page bibliography.

Several aspects of this book deserve to be praised. Poythress's irenic spirit of dialogue may not please hardliners on either side of the debate but it should lead to improved understanding and greater mutual respect among the interested parties. This is certainly preferable to the harsh polemicizing which unfortunately has entered the debate from both sides in the past. Let it be understood that the disagreements which divide dispensationalists and covenant theologians are a family matter within the body of Christ. Certainly the two groups share more agreements than disagreements. Poythress's implementation of such an emphasis is perhaps its greatest strength.

Poythress is also to be commended for being reasonably aware of contemporary developments in dispensational circles (pp. 8, 12, 33-38, 51, 62, 117, and 124). He does not waste his time beating the proverbial "dead horse." He has noted the modifications made by some dispensationalists toward a "one people of God" soteriology and an "inaugurated Kingdom" eschatology. This is remarkable since so few modified dispensationalists have published their views.

There are several areas where Poythress gently but clearly points out definite weaknesses in classic dispensationalism. Among these is the all too frequently heard argument that the real issue is the existence of redemptive epochs. Thus, as this reasoning goes, "Anyone who does not worship on Saturday is a dispensationalist." Poythress shows that this is not the issue at all, and that the central problem is the relationship of Israel and the Church (pp. 11-12). Another weakness clearly shown is Scofield's hermeneutic of the "absolute literalness" of prophecy (pp. 24-27). This is related to another foible, the insistence that the OT is merely "applied" to the Church, not "fulfilled" in the Church (pp. 34-38).

Perhaps the most substantial contribution of the book is its discussion of "literal interpretation" in chapters 8-10. The gist of the argument is that

Israel's interpretive viewpoint included awareness of its uniqueness as God's special covenant people. Thus spiritually sensitive Jews would have reflected upon the anticipatory and symbolic nature of the OT economy. This would have enabled them to avoid "flat" OT interpretations due to a recognition of the open-ended suggestiveness of much OT prophecy. Be that as it may, this is a suggestion that needs to be considered in dispensational circles (for example, I have no problems with such a suggestion as long as this prophetic open-endedness results in an *expansion* of the OT promises to the Gentiles, not a *deletion* of ethnic Israel from OT prophetic fulfillment).

A few problems should be noted. The book is slightly marred in one place by the typesetter's use of the wrong font for ἵνα πληρωθῇ (p. 54). Some chapters (6, 7, 11, 13, 14) are quite short, and transitions between the chapters are not always clear. This gives the book an appearance of disconnectedness, though its content is generally cohesive. Though the book does generally succeed in its desire for irenic dialogue, there is one sentence which seems to violate that when Poythress describes himself as a "nondispensationalist hoping to persuade dispensationalists" (p. 67). Here there may be a hint of the old polemics, but it must be emphasized that this is not at all the tone of the book as a whole.

Poythress states in the first chapter of the book that "In the dispute between dispensationalism and covenant theology, both sides cannot be right." He goes on to state that one position might be wrong and the other right, or that one position might be mostly right, yet still have something to learn from the other side (p. 7). I would like to propose another way of construing the dispute. Both covenant theology and dispensationalism are finite, human attempts to synthesize the plan of God as revealed in His inerrant Word. As such, both positions are fallible attempts to articulate infallible truths. Further, both positions have exhibited considerable change and development through the years.<sup>1</sup>

Since both positions are fallible and developing, both necessarily contain some degree of imprecision and error, and both must continually seek to be more biblical in articulation (*semper reformanda*). Thus Poythress's charge that dispensationalists tend to harmonize biblical texts with their system rather than doing grammatical-historical interpretation (pp. 56–57) must be admitted. His point about social forces affecting dispensationalists (pp. 57–62) is also cogent. The same charges, however, could be leveled against covenant theologians, who are no less susceptible to harmonistic tendencies and social forces. Poythress implicitly admits this (pp. 58, 65), yet he does not consistently implement it in the book's discussions. Similarly, his remarks about anti-nomian tendencies in some dispensationalists (p. 63), while true, are just as applicable to some reformed theologians.

<sup>1</sup>Such developments in covenant theology have been catalogued by Willem A. VanGemeren, "Israel as the Hermeneutical Crux in the Interpretation of Prophecy," *WTJ* 45 (1983) 132–44; and 46 (1984) 254–97. Recently Craig Blaising has performed similar service for dispensationalists in "Doctrinal Development in Orthodoxy," *BSac* 145 (1988) 133–40; and "Development of Dispensationalism by Contemporary Dispensationalists," *BSac* 145 (1988) 254–80.

Poythress's proposals for avenues of dialogue are generally appropriate. The suggestion that 1 Cor 15:51–53 and Heb 12:22–24 are crucial texts is no doubt true. However, the idea of basing our approach to the OT *primarily* upon the book of Hebrews (p. 70) may be neither wise nor workable. First, it may be unwise since Hebrews neither proposes nor intends to teach hermeneutics, though our hermeneutics should be in harmony with Hebrews and the rest of the NT. Second, it may not be workable since the situation and hermeneutics of the book of Hebrews are notoriously controversial. It would therefore be difficult, if not improper, to impose the unique situation mirrored in the view of the OT and the book of Hebrews on the modern doctrinal debate between dispensationalism and covenant theology. The manner in which the entire NT interprets the OT should be brought into the discussion.

To conclude, it is to be hoped that dispensationalists and covenant theologians alike make use of this book and continue the dialogue which it ought to spawn. Zondervan Publishing House should plan a sequel written by a dispensationalist: *Understanding Covenant Theologians!*

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*In the Minds of Men*, by Ian T. Taylor. Revised edition. Toronto: TFE Publishing, 1987. Pp. 498. \$29.95 Cloth; \$19.95 Paper.

The subtitle of this book is "Darwin and the New World Order." Taylor's lofty goal is to make "abundantly plain" the influence of evolutionary thought in history, science, religion, and politics (p. xii). There follows a 498 page compilation of fascinating issues, ranging from mutations to mammoths, Neanderthal Man to Niagara Falls erosion, dinosaurs to the Day-age theory. Throughout the discussion Taylor stresses the "minds of men," or ideologies, in interpreting data. The scientific method always operates with built-in presuppositions.

Ian Taylor is a Toronto-based engineer with a career in research metallurgy. He is also the producer-writer of a recent documentary television series on origins. The intense viewer response convinced Taylor that a comprehensive book was needed on Creation-evolution. He was correct: *In the Minds of Men* is in its second printing, both in hardback and paper. Taylor holds firmly to the Creation view of origins. He writes in a pleasing style which might be described as objective, gracious, and nonoffensive. This has led to positive book reviews by secular publishers and orders from public libraries, a rare exception for Creation studies. Readers will enjoy Taylor's thorough documentary style. He has gone the "extra mile" in clarifying details and using original sources. The book's value is enhanced by 80 portraits, 92 other illustrations, 17 tables of technical data, 381 footnotes, and 634 references. *In the Minds of Men* is a valuable source book of information on Bible-science topics.

Taylor's approach to world views is chronological, concentrating on the historical tension between theism and secular humanism. The author sees the



latter as resting on a three-legged stool from which he knocks out individually its legs. These precarious legs and their main representatives are uniformitarian geology (Charles Lyell), evolution (Charles Darwin), and sociobiology (Herbert Spencer). Taylor recognizes that all attempts to compromise science and scripture are futile. There is a gulf between theistic and secular ideologies which cannot be bridged. "Each attempt at compromise mixes more or less science with more or less Scripture and produces a result more or less absurd (p. 364)."

Taylor's book is a storehouse of useful scientific details. Lamarckism, circular reasoning, vestigial organs, the geologic column—all are explained in clear fashion. An entire chapter discusses the personal life of Charles Darwin. Along with his science accomplishments, the dark side of Darwin's family life is exposed like a soap opera. Darwin's conversion story is thoroughly debunked, despite popular tracts that declare a deathbed repentance. Also debunked is the popular notion that Darwin's original faith in Scripture was replaced by the enlightenment of scientific discovery. Instead, Taylor gives evidence that Darwin never understood the basic doctrines of Scripture, even after three years of theological study at Cambridge (p. 120). The opposition that Darwin felt from contemporaries is also clarified. Not all scientists jumped on the evolution band wagon. One critic was Philip Gosse, an early naturalist and a Plymouth Brethren.

Not surprisingly in a book of such wide scope, a few of Taylor's comments will raise eyebrows. For example he intimates that Genesis 9 supports the cursing of the black race (p. 262). In truth, Ham's curse by Noah is not, in any sense, a proof text for slavery or segregation. I am sure Taylor would agree but his discussion is unclear. The book is somewhat dated in its promotion of man-made tracks and dinosaur prints along the Paluxy River in Texas. Also, the idea that the speed of light is decaying is promoted at length. Both of these topics are undergoing critical analysis in current Creationist literature.

To counter these minor weaknesses, let me also mention two valuable items in the book. Remember the story of the plesiosaur-like creature dredged up by Japanese fisherman in 1977? The body was 33 feet long and weighed 4000 pounds. Taylor describes this episode fully and also reproduces the only photograph of the monster. Then he goes further and explains why the news of the discovery was censored almost everywhere except in Japan, where a postage stamp was issued to commemorate the event! As a second strong point, Taylor reviews the 1633 controversy between Galileo and the Roman Church. This trial has often been used by secular scientists to show that the church (i.e., Creation) is old-fashioned, wrong, and heartless. However, Taylor neatly reverses the attack. He reminds the reader that if theologians had not adopted the false science of Ptolemy in the first place, they would not have been led astray (p. 25)! This insight is characteristic of much careful thinking in the book.

Taylor's book reveals the foolishness and also the demonic tenacity of secular humanism. We are indebted to him for raising an alarm against secular thinking in an interesting and well-written fashion.

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*The Early Earth: An Introduction to Biblical Creationism*, by John C. Whitcomb. Revised edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986. Pp. 174. \$8.95. Paper.

Whenever one reads Whitcomb, one can expect something biblically sound, God-honoring, and Christocentric. This revised edition of *The Early Earth* is certainly no exception. This 1986 work is a revision of his earlier 1972 edition, with the same title.

In this work, as in the earlier edition, Whitcomb vigorously defends biblical creationism in opposition to either theistic or atheistic evolutionism. He defends the traditional view of a comparatively recent creation of the earth within six literal, 24-hour days.

Whitcomb's excellent demonstration (pp. 57-63) of the impossibility of current evolutionary accretion theories concerning the supposed origin of the earth from the sun or a proto-sun will be of special interest to students who honestly wish to explore the problems with the theories of modern evolutionary cosmogonists. The author's appeal to the universe's "overwhelming evidence of design" (p. 63), which has forced astronomers to acknowledge the "Anthropic Principle," which describes the harmony between the way the human mind thinks and the "cosmic mathematical formulas which are independent of the human mind," is especially cogent.

One of the great strengths of this work is the author's appeal to non-Christian scientists to refute the evolutionary view of the origin of our material universe. The evolutionist's embarrassment, namely that several of the world's most renowned scientists are now, in honesty, seriously questioning the *theory* of evolution, is properly highlighted by Whitcomb. One example of many appearing in the book (p. 63) is the opinion of the prominent astronomer, Sir Harold Jeffries: "I think that all suggested [scientific] accounts of the origin of the Solar System are subject to serious objections. The conclusions in the present state of the subject would be that the system cannot exist" (*The Earth: Its Origin, History and Physical Constitution*, University Press, Cambridge, England, 1970, p. 359). Another scientist, Fred L. Whipple, writes: "All of the hypotheses [regarding solar system formation] so far presented have failed, or remain unproved, when physical theory is properly applied" (*Orbiting the Sun*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981, p. 284). Whitcomb is not suggesting that these scientists who have serious doubts about the evolutionary model are embracing creationism. He is simply demonstrating that many outstanding scientists are saying that, to them, evolutionary cosmogony, as currently stated, is no longer tenable.

Whitcomb's chapter (4) on "The Creation of Mankind" is alone worth the price of the book. It should be required reading in every Christian educational institution in America. His treatment of biblical chronology as it relates to Genesis 5 and 11 is especially helpful in understanding pre-Abrahamic chronology, *contra* post-Darwinian theories taught by some Christians. Of particular interest was the author's recognition that a belief in the inerrancy of the biblical autographs does not automatically guarantee a true theology. One's bibliology may be right but his interpretation may be woefully unbiblical.

The most important aspect of the book is the exposure of the teaching of many influential Christians who are theistic evolutionists (who teach the

evolution of Adam from some previously existing animal life form, in direct contradiction of the Biblical account in Genesis) or who are "concordists," who try to harmonize the order of events in Genesis 1 with the order of events in the imaginary timetable of evolutionary geology. Whitcomb pinpoints the reason for all such unbiblical thinking as "the immense pressure placed upon them [concordists and theistic evolutionists] by the uniformitarian/evolutionary consensus of the scientific establishment of the late nineteenth century." He's absolutely right! Men would still rather believe men than God.

The book closes with an excellent exegetical, theological, and common sense refutation of the "Gap Theory," or any other "ruin-reconstruction" theories. All the issues involving the use of such words as *yom*, *bara*, *asah*, and *tohu wabohu* are dealt with thoroughly. Accommodation to "science" is the only reason such "theories" still hang on.

Significant updating has been done, and this revised edition is well worth the purchase.

JOHN A. SPROULE  
CAPITAL BIBLE SEMINARY

*John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait*, by William J. Bouwsma. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988. Pp. 320. \$22.95. Cloth.

William Bouwsma's study of John Calvin is itself as much a study in tensions as was the man it seeks to portray. This is an important work, a work that ought to be read by those interested in Calvin, the Reformation, the history of Western civilization, etc., but its success in accomplishing its titled task is at last mixed. Much effort and Bouwsma's strength in historical insight have been brought into play, yet whether it is in fact Calvin in the portrait or something not quite explicit or definable is not at first clear.

From one side this work represents a historian's attempt to do with Calvin what Eric Erikson sought (I think largely in vain) to do with *Young Luther*, that is, to come to some understanding of a great man (Calvin) by means of careful analysis of words and metaphors used in order to piece together, in this instance, a "psychology of Calvin." This is precarious stuff at best. Such analysis removed four hundred years cannot help but be heavily disfigured (*cf.* Erikson) and any illusions that were held in Erikson's era of psychology as an exact science have long since eroded. Admittedly, Bouwsma, as a historian, has a far greater sensitivity to historical context but at the very least I fail to see where he has actually worked his way through the "hermeneutical circle" central to his format (*cf.* below).

Further, Bouwsma is, to a great extent, using Calvin prismatically, i.e., as an avenue into the anxieties of the sixteenth century and the unharmonized polarities in its philosophy, its religion, its politics, and its anthropology. In the age of eclecticism Calvin is set forth as the true, though unresolved, eclectic man. Before this issue of Bouwsma's historical use of Calvin, there seems ever to implicitly underlie reflection of an *almost* restrained desire in the author to set forth a lesson for our troubled times.

From almost the first page, one of the central purposes of the book is to show Calvin not as reformer or preacher of Scripture or as theologian of the church (indeed these are often played down in themselves) but in all things as a true disciple of Erasmus. There is no question as to the influence of humanism on Calvin's development and thought (historical-grammatical-cultural interpretation of Scripture in a humanist method of approaching a literary text), but to make him at most points another Erasmus is to push with a strenuousness that exceeds legitimacy. Places where Bouwsma admits differences are done grudgingly.

Another side of Calvin, one often approached indirectly is that of the reformer as Scholastic, a medieval man of the church. Calvin's time was an era of transition and tension (as noted above). There was in Calvin that which Bouwsma refers to as the conservative, philosophical Calvin, the man of overriding theological and political principles whose content often clashes with the contradictions and complexities of life. This is the Calvin who, says the author, fears the "abyss," the chaotic, the anarchistic effects of unrestrained freedom. Herein lies the basis of his title (applied by many, improperly, both politically and religiously) "the tyrant of Geneva." Bouwsma points out in this perspectival setting that both Thomist and Ockhamist views were vying in Calvin as they had been for almost two hundred years in theology/philosophy. But, at the same time, there was also, says Bouwsma, Calvin the politician/rhetorician, or to be more precise, Calvin the Machiavellian. Bouwsma even goes so far at one point, as to call the God of Calvin the preeminent manifestation of the Machiavellian prince. Why Bouwsma would refer to the recognition of Practical differences and the sensitivity to situations, peoples and cultures as Machiavellian is a significant question, especially considering the modern connotations that have arisen around the very name and "methodology." The reference or attachment would seem at least a little forced, especially since Machiavelli was a near contemporary whose influence would have hardly been felt by Calvin directly and whose reckoning of ethics and their source Calvin would have reviled.

One would surely have to acknowledge Calvin's role as reforming Churchman par excellence. Far more than Luther or the other reformers, Calvin's concern for the church and that which comprises or is required for there to be a true Church are explicitly developed (Book IV in the *Institutes*). While, as Bouwsma notes, Calvin was no ecclesiologist in any systematic sense, he clearly saw that in the Church pre-eminently (and in all the spheres of the Christian life) Christ was to be exalted, the clear focus of attention. This is clearly Calvin's climactic concern in all issues in which he engaged polemically. This point is sadly lacking in Bouwsma's analysis, here and throughout, and to miss the Christological center of Calvin is to miss the living ardor of Calvin. This (Christology) was, for example, the reason for his twofold definition of the Church: first, where the Word is preached and, second, where the Sacraments are rightly administered. This issue (contra late medieval Roman Catholicism and its self perception following the Fourth Lutheran Council) was Christological. One additional point, regarding Calvin the Churchman, which I use by way of example to reflect what results from Bouwsma's handling/use of Calvin, is a statement of Bouwsma's regarding Calvin's view

of Scripture, "To Calvin the notion of verbal inerrancy would have suggested willful blindness" (p. 122). This statement, a manifestation of Barthian interpretation of Calvin, has been long and often been shown to be incorrect (cf. Edward Downey, A. M. Hunter, R. Seeburg and O. Ritschl as some examples).

But this previous print brings to light in small part what Bouwsma does methodologically throughout the work and in all of the above mentioned issues, i.e., it seems that he wants to make Calvin into something particularly significant to Bouwsma himself. There are hints in every section, particularly in the first half of the work, that this "portrait" of Calvin is in fact a means whereby a historico-religious question is being grappled with in the author's own life.

As noted at the outset of this review, the reviewer's final response to this work is somewhat ambivalent. It is a significant contribution to Calvin studies and will need to be interrelated with on several issues. When studied critically and with some prior background in Calvin's life and thought this would *then* be a useful graduate/seminary text to use with Calvin's works. But as an introduction to Calvin and his thought within the sixteenth century context T. H. L. Parker's biography would be more useful. When put all together Bouwsma's "sixteenth century portrait" of John Calvin lacks real humanity—it is largely a cacophony of parts.

JOHN D. MORRISON  
LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

*Heresies: the Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present.* By Harold O. J. Brown. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988. 486 pp. \$18.95. Paper.

The author of this treatise, a professor of historical theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, believes that the doctrines of Christian orthodoxy are all to be found in the Scriptures as the "faith once delivered to the saints." He acknowledges, however, that some features of orthodox belief, especially those that pertain to the Trinity and the two natures of Christ, are only implicit in the New Testament. This has led to great controversies which forced the church to define its position in the ecumenical creeds that reached the apex of definition at Chalcedon in 451. Heresy then, despite its damaging effects, has exerted a beneficial influence by compelling Christians to affirm their theology and Christology in precise terms.

Brown covers a vast array of heresies from ancient teachings such as Gnosticism, modalism, and Arianism to the contentions of modern rationalism, although his treatment of the twentieth century is very scant. This book is rich in historical data which show how and why particular deviations occurred. Brown concentrates on theology proper and the person of Christ.

He gives little attention to the work of Christ and therefore to soteriology. This is a disappointing omission which impairs the value of his work.

Although the author has a broad knowledge of church history, his judgments are sometimes difficult to understand, and his book contains some careless errors of fact. Why, for example, does Brown contend that J. N. Darby "and the dispensationalists who follow him consider the church to be a kind of parenthesis that really is not part of world history"? (61). Since the New Testament church has been in the world almost twenty centuries, it would be ludicrous to deny that it is part of world history. Has any dispensationalist ever made such an assertion?

It is odd that Professor Brown labels the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius as a *minor* problem for orthodoxy (200ff.). He attributes to Augustine belief in limited atonement but supplies no documentation to verify it. This reviewer is quite confused by the statement that the Paulicians were "a moderately heretical group that was reconciled to Roman Catholicism in the seventeenth century" (247). The primary document for the study of the Paulicians is the Armenian *Key of Truth* which shows clearly that the sect denied the deity of Christ.

What could the author mean when he says the "church cannot exist at all without a measure of mysticism" (285)? If this is so, the historic Protestant insistence upon *sola scriptura* seems inappropriate. Perhaps Brown's conclusion here is a careless mistake, as is his claim that John Hus denied transubstantiation. The transcript of Hus' trial at the council of Constance shows that he affirmed the Roman concept of the eucharist. It is likewise careless scholarship to translate Luther's spiritual *Anfechtung* as *aggression* rather than *depression* (316), and the claim that the Mennonites adopted immersion under the influence of Polish Anabaptists is simply not so. The vast majority of Mennonites have never employed immersion as their mode of Baptism.

Although *Heresies* is a compendium of useful information, too many errors of fact and some dubious interpretations diminish its value. The author's style of writing is generally lucid, although he, like many academic writers, assumes that he may convert nouns into verbs at will. One consequently encounters jargon such as *relativize*, *trivialize*, and *ritualize*, and Brown frequently employs present and future tenses to describe past events.

JAMES EDWARD MCGOLDRICK  
CEDARVILLE COLLEGE

*Less Than Conquerors*, by Douglas W. Frank. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986. Pp. 310. \$14.95. Paper.

Shocking! Startling! Disturbing! Different! The subtitle of this book, "How Evangelicals Entered the Twentieth Century," suggests a historical



study which would hardly call for such opening exclamations. But they do apply. The description on the back cover indicates that this is more than a historical analysis—"Less Than Conquerors is a call to replace the blurred and self-serving gospel of a besieged subculture with the genuine gospel of Jesus Christ." The tone of the book is well proclaimed in that cryptic sentence. With deft twist of word here and barbed comment and pointed question there, the author sarcastically and cynically provides quite a different interpretation of what he classifies as a traumatic period (1850-1920) in American evangelicalism. He readily acknowledges that the focus of the study is somewhat narrow since it looks at three currents (theological, devotional, and evangelistic) which achieved popularity during this particular period of time. Thus, the reader is presented with Frank's analysis of dispensational premillennialism, Victorious Life theology, and the evangelistic revivalism of Billy Sunday. It is certainly not a pretty picture with which the reader is confronted. Indeed, any historical analysis ought to treat honestly both strengths and weaknesses of movements and of those individuals who impacted their own day. One wonders, however, what purpose was served by scathingly, scornfully, and negatively calling into question the very motivations of several generations of men who were dispensational premillennialists. To question why men embraced, studied, taught, and proclaimed dispensational premillennialism, or called for a life of obedience and submission to Christ and Scripture, or preached the gospel of Christ in large crusades, is biblically unacceptable.

This is precisely where the study fails to stand, simply because it sought to penetrate the inner workings of hearts and minds, of why men do this and not that, or select to emphasize this and not that. It sought to put forth and then to critique hastily the confusion which came into the worldview of those locked into these three currents. They were facing industrialism and capitalism. They felt (although time and again the reader finds that this was not really known to them) a sense of having lost control of history and of their destiny. This was the inner drive, hidden beneath the surface, that thrust them into what they said and what they did. It accounts, believe it or not, for the rise and attraction of dispensational premillennialism! This was the theological tool which would enable the losers to again become the conquerors! But one must resist the temptation to reply in the same sarcastic vein to which Frank so often resorts. Frankly, it was an attitude unbecoming of what purported to be a serious study, undertaken on a sabbatical, of one's forbears, roots, and "subculture."

Frank has, in effect, impugned the integrity and the scholarship of many godly men who, earnestly seeking to rightly divide the Word of truth, proclaimed and taught with conviction dispensationalism. Were these men just blindly following another without doing their homework and their exegesis? Were these all driven by some hidden motivation, somehow collectively, to grasp again the controls of history? In so doing, did they really summarily dismiss centuries of theological understanding? Were they really unconsciously seeking for another worldview that would explain that deep sense of loss and recapture for them significance? Highly unlikely!



Interwoven with the historical study are short Bible studies. The application of these sermons results in the three currents (1) being unfavorably compared with the person, message, and spirit of Habakkuk and of Job—if they would only have been like these men of old—and (2) being compared unjustifiably with the attitude and spirit of the Pharisees—if they had only not behaved like these men of old! Really there are no grounds for drawing such comparisons, even given some of the imprecisions and weaknesses in the writings of dispensationalists, the deeper-life movement, or the sermons of revivalism during that time period.

Frank does acknowledge, thankfully, that for the most part evangelicals back then were godly folks, earnest about the truth. However, whatever strengths they had, whatever earnestness they displayed, are swept aside in the overwhelming flood of negative criticisms and attempts to discern the “hidden why” behind the movements they represented.

Traditionally it seems, a review should end with some commendation, notwithstanding any negative critique offered. One redeeming feature of this book is the realization it brings to the reader that Christianity did indeed have something of an impact on American society, and is also embedded in the history of America—it just cannot be ignored. Other than that, sorry! It is not a book that must be on the bookshelf as part of those volumes on the history and subsequent impact of American evangelicalism.

TREVOR CRAIGEN  
FILDERSTADT, WEST GERMANY

*Peace and Revolution: The Moral Crisis of American Pacifism*, by Guenter Lewy. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988. Pp. 283. \$19.95. Cloth.

As Americans look back to the painful decade of the 60s, there has been a growing realization that many dramatic social changes took place in the shadow of the Vietnam conflict. Guenter Lewy, using the archives of four leading pacifist organizations, points to the shift from classic pacifism to a politicized pacifist alliance with the New Left ultimately resulting in the advocacy of violence in the overthrow of “capitalist” regimes.

Until the Vietnam War the mainstream pacifists described by Lewy in Part I espoused non-violence on all sides in any struggles. They firmly resisted any formal ties with organizations such as the Communist Party and its fronts which did not adhere to that principle. Furthermore, while attempting to be the voice of conscience in America, pacifists did not interfere with other Americans in their perceived duty to carry on war. They attempted to work peacefully within the bounds of the democratic process. The Vietnam era saw all of this change.

Lewy uses four of the major pacifist organizations to portray this shift: the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), the War Resisters League (WRL), and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). Part II documents the

dramatic shift from an era "when pacifists were pacifist" to a stance hardly recognizable with classic pacifism. The doctrine of non-violence was distorted to allow violence as an acceptable response to the more oppressive social violence of the ruling class and Western imperialist powers. Participation in all-inclusive coalitions eventually led to close alliances with Communist organizations as well as the possible infiltration of Communists into the leadership of the pacifist groups. Civil disobedience including the seizure and destruction of public property became an instrument of dissent. Pacifists now working for the military victory of Communist insurgents are justly described by Lewy as *de facto* "just war" theorists with a distorted definition of "just."

Part III goes on to demonstrate that the changes made in the Vietnam era were permanent shifts. Pacifists clung to unrealistic views about the purposes and practices of North Vietnam and Cambodia in the face of overwhelming evidence of social repression and mass murders. The leaders of Cuba and Grenada became the darlings of American pacifists. The close alliances, the revised views, and the strategies of dissent developed during the Vietnam era consistently mark these four mainline pacifist groups to the present.

The author's conclusions in Part IV call for American pacifists to return to their original values. They should serve as a conscience for society rather than obstructionists to the democratic process and unwitting allies of the nation's enemies.

On the whole, Lewy has effectively documented his case. The shift of American pacifism to a new agenda is clearly and forcefully outlined. However, Lewy's own position is not without some weakness.

The author has glossed over an important distinction which must be made. The root of the problems for American pacifism did not begin with an infusion of socialists after World War I (p. 4). Before that, the mainstream pacifist movement abandoned biblical authority and lost its moral foundation. This vacuum is the more serious problem. Lewy fails to deal with those pacifists and non-resisters who continue to hold to views based on their understanding of Scripture. In doing so, he has unfairly lumped this group into a sweeping and unjustly generalized condemnation of American pacifism.

Lewy is also willing to employ the same type of logic which he condemns when found in the thinking of the pacifists. Their logic is to follow the "ethic of ultimate ends" which rejects the concept that the end justifies the means (p. 241). Lewy, however, is allowed to argue, for example, that American restrictions on civil rights in Grenada was acceptable since the end was good and since they were comparatively minor in the face of what was done before by the deposed leftist regime (p. 153). Lewy wants a pacifism judged by a utilitarian ethic whereby the intentions proclaimed, no matter how honorable and sincere, must be rejected on the basis of their results and consequences (p. 247). He comes close to advocating that the laws enacted by the government are to be obeyed in every case. There is little room for obedience to God as the higher priority (pp. 179-80). The apostles before the Sanhedrin who chose to obey God rather than men would find little support here.

In conclusion, the author has made his case. American pacifism shorn of its authority in biblical understanding drifted into moral disaster and ethical contradictions. However, Lewy's utilitarian ethic and an oversimplification of the importance and role of individual conscience does not provide any moral higher ground. His thundering call to fundamental values and his description of pacifism as one of the great moral tragedies of our age give off an uncertain sound in light of his inadequate ethical base. Readers, such as this writer, who find a biblical basis for their refusal to bear arms end up feeling entirely left out of the discussion.

DAVID R. PLASTER  
GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*New Testament Social Ethics for Today*, by Richard N. Longenecker. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984. Pp. xiii + 108. \$5.95. Paper.

Longenecker's concise and timely work contains five chapters, an epilogue, and a selected, categorized bibliography for further study. It represents careful research, though it is written in an engaging, popular style. After pointing out the current dilemma in ethics, Longenecker proceeds to outline his developmental hermeneutic and to expound his key text, Gal 3:28. This verse is viewed as a divine mandate for cultural, social, and sexual ethics. The book has a three-fold purpose, encompassing hermeneutical, didactic, and hortatory concerns (xi-xii). Since the book is intended to "deal principally with hermeneutics" (xi), this review will have a similar focus.

Chapter one describes four ways in which Christians utilize Scripture in ethical discussion: (1) as a legal code, (2) as a source of underlying principles, (3) as a locus of existential encounter, and (4) as a guide on how to act lovingly in situations. Longenecker attempts to glean some truth from these approaches, though he views each of them as flawed. Seven biblical principles are proposed as a basis for the hermeneutical and hortatory chapters which follow. Most of these are very helpful. However, despite the disclaimer (12), I still sense an implicit antinomianism (11-12) which tends to limit the prescriptive force of biblical statements. Additionally, the emphasis upon "immediate and personal direction by God" and the "direct action of the Holy Spirit" (13, 15) could degenerate into a mystical subjectivism. The use of 1 Cor 2:10-16 as a proof-text for such immediate direction is debatable (cf. W. Kaiser, "A Neglected Text in Bibliology Discussions: 1 Corinthians 2:6-16" *WTJ* 43 [1981]: 301-9). These two issues indicate that further investigation of the relationship between biblical law and the leading of the Holy Spirit is needed.

Chapter two sketches Longenecker's developmental hermeneutic, the method which is used in the examination of Gal 3:28 in the rest of the book. The development of theology within the canon and in subsequent church history is outlined. A model is constructed which features organic growth in continuity with a foundational core. Thus the NT contains *normative* gospel

declarations and principles and *descriptive* records of how these principles were practiced by the apostles. Of course, Longenecker is absolutely correct that the NT is not a textbook of systematic theology (22). However, I wonder whether Longenecker has done justice to the timeless principles cited by the apostles in their various situational teachings (e.g., 1 Cor 11:3, 7–9, 12; Eph 5:24–25; 1 Tim 2:13–14). Is apostolic *practice* based upon such principles normative, or is normativeness reserved for the gospel and vague deductions from it? This problem once again shows the need for improved articulation of a difficult hermeneutical issue. D. A. Carson has shown the logical problem in this sort of dismissal of situational directives, but he has not supplied a solution (*Exegetical Fallacies* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984] 101–2).

Chapters three, four, and five approach Gal 3:28 along the lines of the model provided in chapter two. The cultural mandate of Gal 3:28a requires the equal treatment of *all* members of society (34). The social mandate of Gal 3:28b should cause believers to work for the freedom and dignity of all men, though it does not require the end of all social structures (69). The sexual mandate for Gal 3:28c is construed as emphasis upon redemption rather than creation. “Men are to have no exclusive prerogatives over women” in the church or in society (93). Here in chapter five Longenecker’s developmental hermeneutic is exemplified in detail as 1 Cor 11, 14 and 1 Tim 2 are treated. In these chapters I especially appreciated Longenecker’s critique of the “homogenous unit” concept of church growth theory (46 n. 11). The emphasis upon the reciprocal duties and unique motives in Paul’s *haustafeln* is also commendable (56–58).

However, some major questions emerge in the discussion of Gal 3:28. First, does Longenecker’s developmental hermeneutic minimize the basic emphasis upon historical and literary context in the interpretive process? I wonder whether Longenecker has sufficiently incorporated the historical setting of Galatians or the flow of argument surrounding Gal 3:28 into his use of the passage. Second, is there not a logical problem when Paul’s statements about those “in Christ” are extrapolated and applied to society in general? This seems to be much more than a “slight extension” (34) of Paul’s thought. Similarly, is the freedom mentioned in Isa 61:1–2/Luke 4:18–19 (52–53) as broad as Longenecker construes it? Is the freedom Paul speaks of in Galatians “an unqualified freedom involving societal as well as spiritual dimensions” (75)? Longenecker’s exegetical basis for these assertions is insufficient. Third, is the explanation of Paul’s use of the theological categories of creation and redemption accurate (84–89, 92–93)? In my view Paul thinks of redemption as a solution to the curse and as a *new* creation (Rom 1:18–23; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10–11). However, Longenecker seems to view redemption as superseding or transcending the roles implicit in creation. Thus redemption undoes the original created order, not merely the cursed post-fall system.

Longenecker’s brief discussion (87) of ἀυθεντέω (“to have authority over someone”) in 1 Tim 2:12 also should be mentioned. He apparently accepts Catherine C. Kroeger’s suggestion that the term refers to loose sexual behavior (“Ancient Heresies and a Strange Greek Verb,” *The Reformed Journal*

[March 1979]:12-15). However, this understanding is contextually inappropriate and doubtful in view of the word's usage, as A. J. Panning ("Ἀυθεντεῖν A Word Study," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 78 [1981]:185-91) and G. W. Knight III ("Ἀυθεντέω in Reference to Women in 1 Tim. 2:12," *NTS* 30 [1984]: 143-57) have shown. It seems clear that Paul's practice here is based upon the original created order and the post-fall cursed order. It is not clear why Longenecker wishes to play down such apostolic practice. This is not merely a description of what was to be done in one particular situation.

Perhaps the biblical teaching that mankind bears the image of God would be a more exegetically sound basis for addressing the cultural, social, and sexual prejudices which Longenecker rightly wishes to correct. In my view his societal extrapolations from Gal 3:28 are exegetically suspect. Nevertheless, Longenecker's book should be read by all Christians who are facing these issues. It is an extremely well written textbook. The summaries of first century cultural attitudes and early church developments provide information which is often neglected in such discussions. The bibliography will provide helpful direction for those who wish to study further. Longenecker's desire to speak biblical truth into the twentieth century is also commendable, whether or not readers agree with all his conclusions. His hermeneutical model should be a profitable springboard for future discussions of the modern application of the Bible.

DAVID L. TURNER

GRAND RAPIDS BAPTIST SEMINARY

*A Primer for Preachers*, by Ian Pitt-Watson. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986. Pp. 112. \$5.95. Paper.

Anyone who is involved for very long in the incredibly challenging discipline of ongoing sermon preparation and delivery in the midst of the ebb and flow of pastoral ministry will sense a kindred spirit in Ian Pitt-Watson. Although his recent ministry has been teaching homiletics at Aberdeen and, since 1980, at Fuller, the realistic perspective gained through substantial pastoral experience shines through in this small, but significant, work.

Pitt-Watson's title for this little book is a pun, expressing the double-barreled aim he has in mind. It is to serve both as a didactic primer for students "beginning the study of homiletics" and as a dynamic "primer," meaning "a small charge used to trigger a much larger detonation" (p. 9). Both aims are worthy ones, and *necessary*, if evangelical pulpit ministry in the difficult closing years of the twentieth century is to succeed in its task of instruction and transforming lives (2 Tim. 3:15-4:5).

In his opening chapter, Pitt-Watson "begins at the (proper) beginning." "What Comes First" (pp. 11-22) is a coherent theology of preaching. At a point when much of evangelicalism is subtly enamored by the eloquent



Apollos-like (Acts 18:24ff.) media expositors, and when young preachers are feeling pressure to pragmatically model after the rhetorical styles of such supremely-gifted pulpiteers, this clarion call back to a Biblical perspective is exceedingly timely. Pitt-Watson is totally correct when he asserts, "The theology of preaching must determine its methodology and therefore the nature of homiletics itself" (p. 12). In the evaluation of this reviewer, this brief treatment does not rival that of Lloyd-Jones, (in *Preaching and Preachers*) or Stott, (in *Between Two Worlds*) but it does lay a solid, thought-provoking foundation for the rest of the book.

The author is to be commended for the Biblically-informed, but reality-based, nature of his comments in this anchor chapter. For example, he defines preaching as "God speaking through us who preach" (p. 14). That is, at the same time, an awesomely humbling and encouraging thought, as Pitt-Watson captures well in these words: "... God speaks through our fumbings and bumbings in the pulpit Sunday by Sunday—sometimes because of what we have said, sometimes (I suspect) in spite of it" (p. 13). Also, he shatters a very common misconception in admitting, "When I was younger, I thought it would become easier as one became more experienced. I find it is not so..." (p. 16). Yet, he speaks with the echo of the pulpit fraternity behind him when he refers to being "drawn to that task (of preaching) irresistibly," in spite of the besetting fear and frustration involved (p. 16).

In chapters 2-4 "the text of Scripture" and "the text of life" are admirably treated, recalling Stott's exegetical-practical emphasis in *Between Two Worlds*. One of the stronger aspects of Pitt-Watson's approach is his detailed analogy of a sermon as an "organic unity" (chapter 5). It adds a more "gut-level" sense to the "big idea" approach championed notably by H. Robinson (in *Biblical Preaching*) and others. The picture of sermon as "organism" leads nicely into chapter 6, "How Sermons Grow." Much practical wisdom is found here and in chapter 7, dealing with "Language and Delivery." However, at this stage of things, Pitt-Watson's on-going transparency in regard to his own ministry gets in the way somewhat. A number of his own personal habits in sermon preparation and delivery, perhaps mentioned as one option among many, come off as "the way to do it." He is on target, however, in his points that preaching is at least as much prayerful art as science and that sermons which read well don't necessarily preach well because of the vast difference between written and oral communication. Further, his emphasis on preparation for the public reading of Scripture is laudatory.

The concluding chapter, "Biblical Truth and Biblical Preaching," is an eye-opening indictment of the fragmenting tendency of preaching in different segments of evangelicalism. Although "holistic" has become a buzz-word in our society, it is nonetheless true that God's inerrant Word speaks to our minds, emotions, and wills, i.e., to the needs of the whole person. I could not agree more with Pitt-Watson's conclusion that "... the truth we preach must be a truth not just thought, but also felt and done" (p. 98). What transforming and uniting power our preaching would have if evangelical expositors could "... soar on the thrust of these three engines..." (p. 99), instead



of our generally provincial appeals to intellect, or emotionalism, or decisionism, and never the three should meet. This, of course, is easier said than done, but it *can* be done considerably better than most of us do.

A brief appended section "For Further Reading" (pp. 105-7) should be supplemented with the larger discussion in Robinson's text as well as the homiletical bibliography of Robinson and Litfin. Successful training in a "primer" should lead to further pursuit of better preaching.

All in all, while *A Primer for Preaching* is short, it is also *sweet*! It is a concise, honest, very readable contribution to the theory and practice of evangelical pulpit exposition. It is more "a first word" than "the last word," as the title states, but it is still a significant step in the right direction.

A. BOYD LUTER, JR.  
TALBOT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY













# Books Reviewed

## BIBLE AND HERMENEUTICS

- McKIM, DONALD K., ed., *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation* (David S. Dockery) . . . . . 79
- RYKEN, LELAND, *A Literary Introduction to the Bible and Words of Life: A Literary Introduction to the New Testament* (Branson L. Woodard) . . . . . 80

## OLD TESTAMENT

- DAVIS, DALE RALPH, *No Falling Words: Expositions of the Book of Joshua* (A. Boyd Luter, Jr.) . . . . . 83
- GRAY, JOHN, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth* (Richard Patterson) . . . . . 84
- VERHOEF, PIETER A., *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (Richard A. Patterson) . . . . . 86

## NEW TESTAMENT

- HARRISON, EVERETT F., *Interpreting Acts: The Expanding Church* (Paul A. Beals) . . . . . 88

## THEOLOGY AND APOLOGETICS

- DICKASON, C. FRED, *Demon Possession and the Christian: A New Perspective* (Tom Davis) . . . . . 89
- DIETER, MELVIN E., HOEKEMA, ANTHONY A., HORTON, STANLEY M., MCQUILKIN, J. ROBERTSON, WALVOORD, JOHN F., *Five Views on Sanctification* (David L. Turner) . . . . . 94
- JEWETT, PAUL K., *Election and Predestination* (David S. Dockery) . . . . . 98
- LASH, NICHOLAS, *Easter in Ordinary: Reflections of Human Experience and the Knowledge of God* (John D. Morrison) . . . . . 99
- POYTHRESS, VERN S., *Understanding Dispensationalists* (David L. Turner) . . . . 102
- TAYLOR, IAN T., *In the Minds of Men*, revised ed. (Don DeYoung) . . . . . 105
- WHITCOMB, JOHN D., *The Early Earth: An Introduction to Biblical Creationism*, revised ed. (John C. Sproule) . . . . . 107

## CHURCH HISTORY

- BOUWSMA, WILLIAM J., *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (John D. Morrison) . . . . . 108
- BROWN, HAROLD O. J., *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present* (James Edward McGoldrick) . . . . 110
- FRANK, DOUGLAS W., *Less Than Conquerors* (Trevor Craigen) . . . . . 111
- LEWY, GUENTER, *Peace and Revolution: The Moral Crisis of American Pacifism* (David R. Plaster) . . . . . 113

## ETHICS AND PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

- LONGENECKER, RICHARD N., *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (David L. Turner) . . . . . 115
- PITT-WATSON, IAN, *A Primer for Preachers* (A. Boyd Luter, Jr.) . . . . . 117



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## Contents

Dispensational Study Group: An Introduction . . . . .	123
RONALD T. CLUTTER	
Understanding Covenant Theologians: A Study in Presuppositions . . . . .	125
PAUL S. KARLEEN	
Response to <i>Understanding Dispensationalists</i> , by Vern S. Poythress . . . . .	139
ROBERT L. SAUCY	
Response to Paul S. Karleen's Paper . . . . .	147
VERN S. POYTHRESS	
Response to Robert L. Saucy's Paper . . . . .	157
VERN S. POYTHRESS	
Dispensational Study Group Discussion . . . . .	161
GERRY BRESHEARS	
Where's the Church? The Church as the Unfinished Busi- ness of Dispensational Theology . . . . .	165
MICHAEL D. WILLIAMS	
Plundering the Lion's Den—A Portrait of Divine Fury (Nahum 2:3-11) . . . . .	183
J. DARYL CHARLES	
Church and Gentile Cults at Corinth . . . . .	203
MARK HARDING	
Noun Clauses in the Greek New Testament . . . . .	225
JAMES L. BOYER	
Book Reviews (see inside back cover) . . . . .	241
Books Received . . . . .	261

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## DISPENSATIONAL STUDY GROUP: AN INTRODUCTION

RONALD T. CLUTTER

On November 16, 1989, a number of persons gathered in San Diego, California, for the fourth public meeting of the Dispensational Study Group. The group has met annually immediately prior to the national meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society since 1986.

Approximately two dozen dispensationalists, most of whom were teaching in colleges or seminaries at the time, met informally at Talbot Theological Seminary in 1985 to discuss current trends and ideas relating to the topic of dispensationalism. Dr. Craig Blaising of Dallas Theological Seminary led the discussion. Results of the meeting were that Blaising was chosen coordinator for the group's next activity and Dr. Gerry Breshears of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary accepted the position of secretary.

The initial public meeting was held in Atlanta, Georgia, on November 20, 1986. More than thirty persons met to hear Blaising present a paper entitled "Developing Dispensationalism." Responses were read by Dr. Stanley N. Gundry, Breshears, Dr. Stephen Spencer and Dr. David L. Turner. A discussion involving all participants followed. Blaising's work was published in two parts and continues to serve as an important introduction to dispensational thinking today.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Darrell L. Bock presented a paper called "The Reign of Christ" at the second public meeting which was held at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 1987. Over fifty persons attended. The 1988 gathering took place at the Billy Graham Center in Wheaton, Illinois, where Mark Bailey of Dallas Theological Seminary read "Dispensational Definitions of the Kingdom." Attendance more than doubled that of previous meetings.

The 1989 meeting of the Dispensational Study Group at the Bethel Theological Seminary West Campus was devoted to a consideration of the book, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, by Dr.

<sup>1</sup>Craig A. Blaising, "Doctrinal Development in Orthodoxy," *Bib Sac* 145:578 (April-June 1988) 133-40 and "Development of Dispensationalism by Contemporary Dispensationalists," *Bib Sac* 145:579 (July-September 1988) 254-80.

Vern S. Poythress of Westminster Theological Seminary. This book is a covenant theologian's critique of dispensationalism issued by Zondervan Publishing House in 1987. The papers and minutes that follow this introduction were presented before a large group of evangelicals, including adherents of both dispensational and non-dispensational thought.

The *Grace Theological Journal* is privileged to present these papers to a wider audience than had opportunity to hear them read and discussed. Two precautions need to be shared. The background of the workshop is the aforementioned book by Poythress and greatest benefit of these papers will accrue to the ones who have read that book. Second, these papers were presented as working papers for group discussion and interaction. They were not written for publication. They must be read in that light.<sup>2</sup> With these two points emphasized, we are pleased to make available papers by Dr. Paul Karleen and Dr. Robert Saucy who present their interactions with *Understanding Dispensationalists*. Poythress' responses to both men follow and the conclusion of the corpus of materials is a summary of the open discussion.

It hardly needs to be said that the views expressed are those of the various participants and do not represent necessarily the position of any group, institution, or this journal.

<sup>2</sup>Note Dr. Poythress' remarks at the beginning of his responses.

# UNDERSTANDING COVENANT THEOLOGIANS: A STUDY IN PRESUPPOSITIONS

PAUL S. KARLEEN

## PURPOSE

SHERLOCK HOLMES once underscored the danger of hypothesizing with paying attention to facts: "It's a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly, one begins to twist facts to suit theories instead of theories to suit facts." In all ages investigators of the biblical text have faced the same pitfall of assuming what is not in fact the case. In recent years this problem has found focus in discussions of presuppositions. One writer has gone so far as to say: "The whole of church history revolves around the presuppositions adopted in study of the Bible in different times and in different circumstances."<sup>1</sup> If this is true, and I believe it is, then any sensible disclosure of presuppositions will contribute to biblical scholarship. In fact, the more light we can throw on our presuppositions, the better our chance of approximating the truth.

In this study I have two main goals: 1) to answer in part the question of whether or not in his *Understanding Dispensationalists* Vern Poythress has read dispensationalism accurately and 2) to offer some contributions to the ongoing investigation of dispensationalism by contrasting it with a competing system.<sup>2</sup> Since my assigned topic is a single book, it would be very easy to single out for attack the author and the system he represents. However, my purpose is not to

<sup>1</sup>Graham N. Stanton, "Presuppositions in New Testament Criticism," in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 60-61.

<sup>2</sup>The full citation is *Understanding Dispensationalists* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987). I must indicate at the outset my personal and professional appreciation for Vern Poythress. I have great respect for his keen mind and believe that he has produced some of the most original and valuable evangelical works. I share with him an interest in the application of linguistics to biblical studies. I know him from my home area as a teacher, expositor and friend of students. I believe that in his book he honestly tries to deal with differences between covenant and dispensational theologians. His approach is irenic and gracious. I only hope that I can—and we all can—be the same in our discussion.

criticize Poythress, or covenant theology, but to use the book to help define the two systems. Since I cannot possibly cover in detail all the relevant passages that Poythress deals with, or even a portion of them, I want to attempt to show that covenant theology and dispensationalism are different for some reasons that are not usually dealt with. While I believe that the book constitutes a valuable contribution to the dialogue between covenant and dispensational theologians, I am also convinced that the book is more about covenant theology than dispensationalism.<sup>3</sup> So I want to try to learn about dispensationalism from what we see about covenant theology.

#### THE PROCESS OF INTERACTING WITH DATA<sup>4</sup>

In recent years many have attempted to formalize ways in which human beings interact with utterances and texts. Such work includes describing how we formulate, test and revise hypotheses about texts and how we bring prior knowledge to bear on any interpretive act.<sup>5</sup> This promises to have far-reaching implications for theologians, many of whom over the centuries have often assumed that approaching texts was a natural process.

In everyday life we determine the meaning of an utterance or text by means of making guesses about all the clues contained in the message.<sup>6</sup> We constantly make adjustments as we receive new information, linking new with old, bringing to bear prior conclusions we have made, setting parts of the message against what we know of the world, the speaker or the writer, what we believe he shares in common with us, and what he may be assuming.<sup>7</sup> We know how to work back

<sup>3</sup>For example, several of the latter chapters (10–13) appear to be an apologetic for covenant interpretation, rather than an exposure of dispensational thinking.

<sup>4</sup>Some of the concepts presented here are from my *Handbook to Bible Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 82–94.

<sup>5</sup>Linguists, psychologists, communication theorists, literary critics and others have been involved in this. See, for example, Robert de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics* (London: Longman, 1981), 210, 211.

<sup>6</sup>De Beaugrande and Dressler, 15, 140. See also E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 207: "The root problem of interpretation is always the same—to guess what the author meant."

<sup>7</sup>De Beaugrande (6) speaks of stored knowledge of the world. Hirsch (177) points out: "That probability judgments inhere in all aspects of textual interpretation is easily demonstrated. First of all, we notice that the construction of meaning from a text embraces elements already construed and accepted for the moment as being known, and other elements acknowledged to be unknown which are the objects of our construing. The obvious example of this is the construing of a crux by an appeal to a known context. But the example of a crux does not represent merely a special case. The object of our construing is always for the nonce a question mark, that is, a crux, and the basis for our choice of a particular sort of meaning is always our appeal to what we assume we already know about the text. On the basis of that assumption, we infer that these words coming in this place in a text of this sort probably mean thus and so."

and forth from smaller to larger components of data. For instance, if someone tells me he went to the "bank," I might think of several possible interpretations of his words, especially if I knew that he often went fishing by a river and also makes transactions at a financial institution. However, if he later specifies that it was the First National that he went to, I rule out the possibility of his having been near water. I have eliminated an option—supplied by my prior knowledge—on the basis of subsequent information. Note the process: encounter with data, application of prior thinking, guess or hypothesis, further data, revision of guess, moving on.

In all of this activity—and we do essentially the same thing in all our waking hours—is the fact that we always bring prior conclusions about life and the universe, about how things function and how we ought to function, to any interpretive moment. We do it with regard to the First National as well as First Peter. We cannot avoid it and we could not live without it. All rational human beings function like Sherlock Holmes, making hypotheses about how things work, then confirming, revising or discarding them when we encounter new data. We also construct more and more hypotheses as we go through life, raising some of them to the status of global, highly influential and determinative canons. These are then viewed as givens and brought to bear on new data.

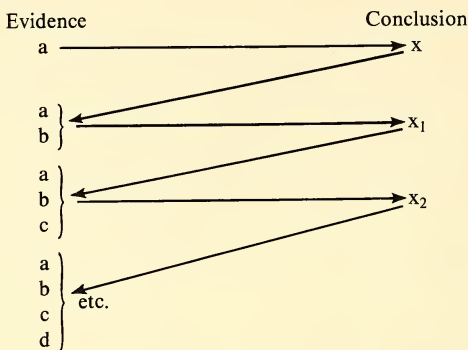
Because in working with the text of Scripture our task is made difficult by linguistic, temporal and cultural displacement, we must rather consciously duplicate this process of interpretation. We have to operate by intentionally making guesses, testing them by further data and then confirming, revising or discarding them. Just as in life as a whole, this process can never stop, since there is always more of Scripture to understand and the message has so many facets. Continual refinement is necessary, and we must always be open to the possibility that new data may alter some of our views. We must be very careful of those global conclusions that we have accepted as working hypotheses.

Furthermore, as with any interpretation in life, in approaching the Bible we can expect to gain the most information if we maximize the individual parts, that is, we try not to leave anything out—a word, paragraph, chapter, etc.—in working through a particular text. Every part is to be measured against the other as we attempt to assign information value to portions of language.<sup>8</sup> Although some parts do

<sup>8</sup>For a number of reasons I think it is valuable to talk in terms of assigning information value rather than "finding meaning." "Meaning" is only a step along the way to gleaning information from an utterance. This concept is presented in an interesting way by Jeremy Campbell in his *Grammatical Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982): actual communication involves the impartation of information, of something totally new or new with respect to the listener at the moment of reception of

not carry as much weight as others in terms of information value, all are significant.<sup>9</sup> By the way, implicit in all this is my assumption that interpreting the Bible is essentially the same task as interpreting secular poetry or the U.S. Constitution. The difference lies in the assumptions we make about the nature of the Bible as a God-given revelation.<sup>10</sup>

The following diagram will illustrate the process.<sup>11</sup> On the left are pieces of data, with each step in the cycle including more data. Conclusions are drawn at various points, and then the data is reexamined:



a message. (See de Beaugrande and Dressler, 9, concerning "informativity.") I prefer to use "meaning" to refer to the assignment of connections (whatever they may consist of) between linguistic symbols and their referents. Thus, determining what something "means" is only part of the total interpretive process.

<sup>9</sup>In regard to the comparative work involved, I have stated elsewhere (*Handbook*, 87-88): "This is a very reasonable way to proceed in approaching the Bible, for it actually views the Bible as a coherent document that can be understood as its parts are interpreted in light of the whole, and vice versa. This really amounts to saying that the Bible interprets itself, that is, all the different parts are needed in order to provide an explanation for the whole, and the whole, when related to the parts, explains them. That is why the supreme principle of biblical interpretation is that the Bible is its own best interpreter. All other principles of interpretation flow from this."

<sup>10</sup>Conservative biblical scholarship has for too long been the victim of a "holy hermeneutic," which sees interpreting the Bible as involving special canons that could never apply to lesser documents and that match the Bible in its uniqueness. We cannot afford not to learn all we can from those interpreting texts in other fields. Hirsch points out (207) that the principles of the logic of validation "are essentially the principles which underlie the drawing of objective probability judgments in all domains of thought."

Our assumptions about the nature of the Scriptures are, of course, of crucial importance. Those who do not hold to inerrancy have redefined the field of relevant data. For them, some portions of the biblical data are misleading or contradictory with respect to other portions, and are essentially to be discarded as far as the process of interpretation is concerned.

<sup>11</sup>This chart and the following one are taken from my *Handbook*, pp. 88 and 90.



One of the dangers in theology is that we stop too soon in the process. Just as a scientist must continually look for new data and attempt to falsify his hypothesis, so must the Bible interpreter.<sup>12</sup> To put it another way, we must remember that the text of the Bible is always primary, not our statements about it. In all our work of theologizing we are only attempting to summarize. That summarizing is absolutely necessary, but we can never allow it to take on a life of its own. The danger arises from the fact that we can easily come to hold the theological statements—our descriptions and summaries of the biblical text in our own words—as more important than the Bible itself, and, as they take on lives of their own, we pay more attention to them than to the Bible. Some of our conclusions along the way become determinative and damage our objectivity toward new data.

Allow me to summarize at this point. We bring background understanding, which includes guesses about how things work, to each interpretive moment. At that point we have already raised some of these guesses—for better or worse—to the level of global or determinative hypotheses. When we come to the biblical text we are attempting to give an explanation of it, to assign information value to it—globally and in regard to its parts. As with all data work, we should make guesses about the meaning of the parts, make more global guesses by way of summary, and continue to interact with the parts, allowing the parts to shape our guesses and hypotheses, not vice versa. Thus we are always obligated to try to disprove working hypotheses.<sup>13</sup>

#### BRANCHES AND ROOTS

As I turn to the text of Poythress's book, I want to mention some things I believe he does well. I think he is very much on the right track in saying that "literal interpretation" is a poor term and

<sup>12</sup>Let's take a central doctrine to illustrate stopping too soon. We may say that we believe that God is infinite, tripersonal, a rational being, etc. We may be very confident that everything in the Bible supports this. We may even believe this with all our hearts. But we must leave ourselves open to finding out more about Him from the text. Could we, for example, ever discover that the God of the Bible is a quadripersonal being? It is not likely, but theoretically possible.

<sup>13</sup>Stanton (68) phrases it this way: "The interpreter must allow his own presuppositions and his own pre-understanding to be modified or even completely reshaped by the text itself. . . . There must be constant dialogue between the interpreter and the text." Similarly, Hirsch (165) says: "The interpreter is convinced that the meanings he understands are inevitable. . . . When an interpreter maintains his unruffled certainty in the face of contrary opinions, we may assume that he has been trapped in the hermeneutic circle and has fallen victim to the self-confirmability of interpretations." "The interpreter's determination to entertain alternative hypotheses about his text . . . is the necessary precondition for objective judgment" (167). "The goal of interpretation as a discipline is constantly to increase the probability that [our interpretive guesses] are correct" (207).

should be replaced by "grammatical-historical" interpretation. I believe that no one has formulated this issue very well yet.<sup>14</sup> Certainly Poythress's knowledge of modern linguistics accounts for his valuable insights into how language works.<sup>15</sup> I wish we all had better understanding of these things. I appreciate his presentation of various ways of talking about literal meaning (taking texts as "flat," etc.).<sup>16</sup> He is also right in saying that "belief in dispensations . . . as such has very little to do with the distinctiveness of the characteristic forms of dispensational theologians."<sup>17</sup> I agree that this does not get at the heart of the matter at all.

I believe, however, that, like dispensationalists, Poythress carries on at a surface level the discussion of what dispensationalism and

<sup>14</sup>See Poythress, 86, 96. The issue of literal interpretation is tied to the matter of metaphor. Literary theorists are not agreed on what constitutes metaphor nor on how human beings recognize metaphor. For a helpful discussion, see Monroe C. Beardsley, "Metaphor," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards, 8 vols. (New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, 1967) 5:285. Under one view of metaphor, metaphorical interpretation involves assigning to data an interpretation that is less expected than another. For example, take the following two sentences:

He's caught on the horns of a steer.

He's caught on the horns of a dilemma.

It is likely that in isolation "horns of a" immediately leads most people to think of an animal. In the second sentence the presence of "dilemma" will lead most people not to think in terms of an animal. Even if they have not heard the entire phrase "horns of a dilemma" before, they will probably attempt to make the *transfer*, or leap, from thinking of physical animal horns to thinking of the bifurcating effect of a dilemma.

Literary critics point out that an overused metaphor quickly loses its surprise or shock quality, and then speakers no longer make the transfer. It is then a "dead" metaphor. As Nelson Goodman points out: "What was novel becomes commonplace, its past is forgotten and metaphor fades to mere truth" (*Languages of Art* [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968], 80). Many new meanings enter languages through metaphor. In fact, one could view this process as one of the main channels of language change.

What is "expected" in messages depends heavily on one's prior assumptions. Thus, in regard to Rev 20:1ff., Poythress would expect "thousand years" to be non-chronological. I would not. For him the "literal interpretation" is the non-chronological one. To put it another way, "literal" and "metaphorical" are not opposites. We can read a text "literally" and conclude that it is metaphorical. Furthermore, literal interpretation is tied to presuppositions and prior knowledge. Thus it is begging the question to assert a belief in literal interpretation (contra Earl Radmacher, "The Current Status of Dispensationalism and Its Eschatology" in *Perspectives on Evangelical Theology*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Stanley N. Gundry [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979]). Poythress believes in literal interpretation, too. In my view, the significant and thorny issue in trying to arrive at a "valid" interpretation is *when one should make*, or *how one knows when to make*, the leap to the less expected interpretation.

The whole communication process also depends heavily on our expectation of what data we will receive. See de Beaugrande and Dressler, 8, 9, 40, 88, 139 and 144 regarding expectation of information.

<sup>15</sup>E.g., Poythress, 79ff.

<sup>16</sup>82ff.

<sup>17</sup>11.

covenant theology are like. For example, he often suggests that some dispensational theologians are moving closer to covenant theologians.<sup>18</sup> He seems to suggest in places that covenant and dispensational theologians lie along a continuum regarding the Kingdom and related issues.<sup>19</sup> We are not dealing with a continuum but a polarity. There may appear to be a continuum if we look at the surface, but the factors controlling interpretation of the data are radically different.<sup>20</sup>

Thus it is fruitless for a dispensationalist to say "If only the covenant theologian would see that Israel and the church aren't the same." (I do not mean to suggest that moving closer together is bad or that it is impossible; just that we are going about it the wrong way.) Furthermore, it is not simply the case that the dispensationalist holds to literal interpretation of the prophets and the covenant theologian does not. That is not the distinguishing feature. The distinguishing feature is *why* the covenant theologian does not and the dispensationalist does (if we can identify it).

I would ask the question, then, whether or not Poythress understood dispensationalism? In a sense it is difficult to tell because his presuppositions so much get in the way. Perhaps Poythress cannot understand dispensationalism *because* of his presuppositions. But I would suggest also that until we deal with the presuppositions of both systems, dispensationalists will not have understood covenant theologians and will not have understood themselves. In his article "Development of Dispensationalism by Contemporary Dispensationalists" Craig Blaising raised once again the question of the *sine qua non* of dispensationalism.<sup>21</sup> I do not believe we will get very far without

<sup>18</sup>E.g., 51.

<sup>19</sup>E.g., 38.

<sup>20</sup>Hirsch's insight (172) is: "Interpretations can have some things in common" but "an interpretation stands or falls as a whole." By the way, I think that Poythress did not follow the title of his book or his initial purpose. He appears to say (102) that he wants to write for covenant theologians so they will understand dispensationalists better. But many portions of the book are directed at dispensationalists, apparently to get them to change. For example, on p. 57 he uses the phrase "leave behind." Furthermore, much of his writing is an attempt to show that dispensationalists are wrong (e.g., 67). Of greater significance, however, is his failure to realize the radical difference between the positions. Suggesting that one could slide a little bit in one direction and end up in the other camp misses the point entirely (although some could). I am reminded at this point of the vigorous debate that has been going on for many years in the field of linguistics, where competing theories of language have developed from radically different views both of the nature of the human capacity for language and of the goals of linguistics. Opposing schools use the same terminology, since often they must talk about the same data, but comparing the surface features of their systems is usually frustrating and confusing, since their goals and initial assumptions are quite different.

<sup>21</sup>In *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 (1988), 254-80.

rephrasing the question: What are the presuppositions of dispensationalism, what are the controlling assumptions? How are they different from those of covenant theology and other systems?

#### THE GLOBAL HYPOTHESIS

If we did not otherwise know what it was, we should get a clue as to Poythress's controlling assumption from the fact that he does not deal significantly with the "number of dispensations" issue. Poythress has not written his book about dispensationalists. His real object is the physical millennialist. While there are many premillennialists who are not dispensational, they are apparently not of particular interest to him. May I suggest that this is not because they are less influential than dispensational premillennialists. No, I think that instead it is because dispensationalists are the consistent premillennialists. I wish we had a better term to use at this point than "premillennialist," since the issue is a physical kingdom on earth for Israel. The dispensationalist has the most thoroughgoing position concerning a physical, *on earth* future for ethnic, redeemed Israel, even though we differ among ourselves and have not done very well at showing *what* Israel's kingdom life will be like.

Poythress's response to the dispensationalist's insistence on this future for Israel is summarized on p. 129: "One *cannot* contemplate a Millennium in which salvation is in union with one man, the last Adam, Jesus Christ, but in which that union is undermined by the distinctiveness of two peoples of God with two inheritances and two destinies, on earth and in heaven" [*italics mine*]. Similarly, on p. 48 he says: "Will there be one people of God at that time or not? I say that there will be, because there is only one representative Head who brings them to salvation by uniting them to himself." This is directly traceable to Poythress's view of the one covenant of grace.

In his "Israel as the Hermeneutical Crux in the Interpretation of Prophecy (II)" Willem VanGemenen phrases the question of the interpretation of the OT prophets in a way that appears to have this kind of progression: There is a soteriological unity in the covenant of grace; it joins all God's people across the testaments; to ask if we are to take the prophets literally is to ask the wrong question; the issue of the interpretation of the prophets is not one of literal versus spiritual/metaphorical/figurative but of the relation of the OT and NT, which is determined by the Covenant of Grace.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup>"Israel as the Hermeneutical Crux in the Interpretation of Prophecy (II)," *Westminster Theological Journal* 46 (1984): 254-97. VanGemenen has stated what appears to lie behind Poythress's writing (269): "The Reformed exegete approaches the prophets from the perspective of the unity of the covenant. Although God has entered into

If this rephrasing on my part is correct, then it is easy to see why questions of interpreting this or that passage "literally" will not get us very far in comparing covenant theology and dispensationalism. We are on the surface with that kind of approach. We have to get at the roots of the systems.

There can be no question that the covenant of grace is the deciding factor in the covenant theologian's eschatology. This observation is not at all a new discovery on my part. What I believe is significant, however, is that Poythress's book reveals over and over how controlling this presupposition is in his handling of passages and issues. It is very close to the surface at most points.

One might object, however, saying that not all covenant theologians consciously depend on the covenant of grace as a starting point. It is probably the case that many who partake of the covenant system have not made the covenant of grace a controlling factor. However, one can enter a system at any point in one's interpretive career without necessarily working through it from the roots on up. This is true of any area of investigation.

One of the most interesting things in all of this is that a covenant of grace *per se* is never specifically found in Scripture. And this is just my point: a hypothesis about the text—which serves well at one point (soteriology)—has been raised to the level of globally determinative status. The interpretive process has stopped and the data is no longer allowed to speak for itself. We could represent this by a second chart, in which the back and forth movement has stopped with a conclusion, and further data is not examined. Conclusion  $x_1$  is accepted as final, and the piece of data  $c$  is never given a chance to speak. The

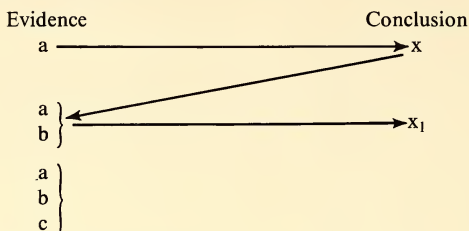
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several administrations of grace . . . , there is but one covenant of grace. The various administrations are expressions of one covenant between the Father and the elect and whose Mediator is Jesus Christ. There are many differences between the experiences of God's people before and after the coming of Christ. However, the differences between the divine administrations before Christ and after Christ must be appreciated in such a way that they do not drive a wedge between the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments." See also his quotation of Jay Adams (265): "The affirmation of the Covenant of Grace correlates well with the eschatological chronology of amillennialism, because it is expected that the present imperfect age will be followed by the perfection of the eternal age." VanGemeren (271) adds: "To what extent does the NT set aside, correct, or affect the literal interpretation of the OT prophets? The answer to these questions does not lie in a definition of literal vs. spiritual interpretation. The issue is that of the essential relationship of the OT and the NT."

Another way of stating this in terms of *outcome* is: There is one covenant; all blessings are in Christ; Israel's blessings are in Christ; we are in Christ; therefore we inherit the blessings. It is noteworthy that many covenantal theologians have sought to affirm a future for ethnic Israel, but affirm that dispensationalists have gone too far in their insistence on a separate track from the church.



interpretive process has broken down. Presuppositions have become dominant.



What is amazing is that in his entire discussion, as far as I can tell, Poythress never questions this presupposition. It is there, it is part of Reformed theology, and that's that. He suggests that some covenant theologians have moved in regard to certain eschatological features, that everyone needs to look at the Scriptures and find out what the Bible says, but never questions this determinative presupposition.<sup>23</sup> He urges the dispensationalist over and over to examine cherished assumptions. Yet he does not do the same. Is it the case that everything is open to negotiation for him but the covenant? In spite of his appeal to all of us to look at the Bible, tradition may condition his thinking far more than he suspects.<sup>24</sup>

I will take a few examples of how the covenant is used in his argumentation, and how logical fallacies are present. On p. 53, speaking about dispensationalism, Poythress says: "The decisions on what is figurative and what way it is figurative may be a product of the system as a whole rather than the inductive basis of it. Or rather we may have a circular process." This is exactly what he does himself at several points. In his discussion of Rom 11 he deliberates the "one people" question. He asks why the two separate terms "Israel" and "the church" are usually used for Jews and the church in the New Testament:

Superficially this might seem to point to the idea of two parallel peoples of God. But one must remember that theology is not to be deduced directly from vocabulary stock (cf. Barr, Silva). . . . [T]he use

<sup>23</sup>Poythress, 70. He points out (40) that dispensationalists do not really disagree with the single way of salvation provided by the covenant. But of course covenant theologians have extended the covenant into the realm of eschatology and the plan of God for groups.

<sup>24</sup>See Poythress's comments on church tradition on p. 64.



of the term "Israel" in the NT] "need not entail any denial of the deeper conceptual and theological unity between Old Testament and New Testament phases of existence of one people of God. . . ." <sup>25</sup>

In other words, when forced to deal with the actual usage of "Israel," he brings the covenant back in again. There cannot be two peoples, even though the terms might seem to suggest it, because there is only one people, or stated negatively, there are not two peoples. The circularity is clearer when we put it this way: there are not two peoples because there are not two peoples.

Interestingly enough, he appeals to a valid discussion of meaning determination by Barr and Silva to escape having to acknowledge that "Israel" means an ethnic entity continuing to have its own identity.<sup>26</sup> Barr and Silva are right, but they are making a different point. Silva says that word studies alone will not give the interpreter all the information he needs. But they cannot be discarded! And that is what Poythress does here. His circularity is seen again on p. 48:

The issue at stake in our present discussion is not how sweeping the consequences of the Second Coming are, how intensive the fulfillment is, but whether the fulfillment at that time will be an organic continuation of what Christ has done now. In this age he has integrated Gentiles and Jews into one body through the cross (Eph. 2:16). Will there be one people of God at that time or not? I say that there will be, because there is only one representative Head who brings them to salvation by uniting them to himself.

Instead of actually looking at the data, Poythress simply brings back the covenant.

What is so obviously missing in this is any proof for a connection between the salvatory unity of the elect and the economic/historic/prophetic unity. The economic unity is for Poythress a subhypothesis of the salvatory unity. But whenever he gets face to face with texts that would disprove the economic unity, he simply repeats the main hypothesis and its subhypothesis: There is a salvatory unity and therefore an economic unity. There is an economic unity because there is a salvatory unity.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Poythress, 44-45.

<sup>26</sup>His reference is to James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961) and Moises Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983).

<sup>27</sup>On p. 43 he states: "We cannot think of the Old Testament people of God as a second people of God alongside the New Testament people of God." Why not? The answer seems to be "Because we *can't*!"

Poythress's presupposition is so strong that in places it leads him to alter his appeal to the dispensationalist to practice consistent grammatical-historical exegesis.<sup>28</sup> I suspect that were it not for the presupposition he would never say this.

Circular argumentation can take several forms, some of which are:

- repeating a claim or assumption without new data
- repeating a claim without allowing new data to speak
- finding what one claims is true (what Poythress accuses the dispensationalist of doing).

I think that Poythress's argumentation particularly falls into the second and third forms. Raising an assumption to a global/determinative status and applying it so that one does not see data or acknowledge what it says constitutes a circular argument.<sup>29</sup>

At times Poythress's argumentation involves him in other logical fallacies. By focusing on Heb 12, to the exclusion of other passages that speak clearly of a physical, earthly Kingdom, he leads the reader to think that the spiritual future for Abraham is all there is. This is the fallacy of the false dilemma: too few choices.<sup>30</sup>

Poythress also depends on inductive (analogical) argumentation to invest kingdom prophecies with symbolic qualities. He often reasons from the existence of symbolic qualities in some features of the OT (e.g., the spiritual aspects of Israel's priesthood) to their existence in other areas (kingdom prophecies).<sup>31</sup> Just because there are some symbolic things in the Bible does not mean that the transfer can be made to other things by association through some other shared feature. Inductive argumentation is never conclusive and is only as strong as the connections that can be established through the shared features.

<sup>28</sup>Poythress, 116. I tend to think that grammatical-historical interpretation includes within it the authorization to switch to metaphor. Only when we have no valid reason to switch do we think of abandoning grammatical-historical exegesis. True grammatical-historical exegesis, which should probably be called something else (perhaps "continuous interaction with the text"), must be formulated to take this into account. I don't think anyone has done this well yet. Ultimately it involves the process outlined earlier of continually going back and forth and comparing the pieces.

<sup>29</sup>See my quotations from VanGeren above in n. 22.

<sup>30</sup>Poythress, 120, 123. On p. 129 he asserts: "The difference between Israel and the church is fundamentally the difference between the people of God *before* and *after* the coming of Christ to accomplish salvation." I believe that at this point we can see how much of the richness of Scripture Poythress misses. This is where the dispensationalist really allows Scripture to open up. God has done, is doing and will do many things with human beings—through one Savior and one way of salvation—to show Himself and His love and our sinfulness. In this sense the dispensations are a corollary of the two peoples distinction.

<sup>31</sup>Ch. 10.

What should we learn from this? I do not believe that Poythress really wants to use poor logic. But I am firmly convinced that his assumptions, or rather one main one, blind him time after time. However, we should all be very careful at this point. Poythress appeals to the dispensationalist to be careful of making false assumptions. His point is well taken. Both sides are guilty at many points of careless logic and exegesis.

As an example of carelessness by dispensationalists, I would point to the use of *oikonomia* in Eph 3:2 to establish a rationale for dispensations. Often the dispensationalist says, on the basis of all its uses in the NT, that this word refers to responsibility as a steward, management of a household, a specified time, etc., and then maps all of this onto the concept of "dispensation."<sup>32</sup> Not only does this involve illegitimate totality transfer, but I suspect that in context the word refers only to Paul's responsibility, not a plan of the ages. I hope we stop using this argument. It involves poor exegesis and poor lexicography.

Another example of lack of thoroughness on the part of dispensationalists is in the area of double fulfillments (e.g., Joel 2 and Acts 2).<sup>33</sup> We must at least recognize that there is a lot of work to do in order to account for such passages under some global approach.

In his first chapter Poythress suggests that in the present dispute "both sides cannot be right" or "one position is mostly right but still has something to learn from the opposing position."<sup>34</sup> There is a third possibility: both are wrong. I think we all ought to leave ourselves open to this option. While I think dispensationalism does a better job with the data, it has a lot of cleaning up to do on its act.

On p. 70 Poythress says: "We do not need to cling tightly to our previous beliefs in order to be safe. In fact, we will not be safe if we are not open to having the Bible challenge even views that we dearly cherish." Perhaps the fact that we are meeting like this is a sign that many of us on both sides really want to find out what the Bible says.

May I suggest some steps to take in what I hope will become an ongoing, fruitful dialogue.

1) Let each side make a concerted effort to identify and examine its presuppositions. Take the ones that the other side points out and be open enough to talk about them. Put the best minds to work on solving them. The dispensationalist ought to ask if the economic difference between Israel and the church is actually an assumption or just the by-product of a deeper feature of the system. It may be a *sine*

<sup>32</sup>See Ryrie's discussion in his *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 24-33.

<sup>33</sup>See Poythress's discussion on p. 53ff.

<sup>34</sup>Poythress, 7.

*qua non*, but is it a deep-level assumption? In what way is the *absence* of the assumption about the covenant of grace significant?

2) Work together on some particular projects. Put a covenant theologian and a dispensationalist together on a specific problem for presentation at a future meeting. Identify topics to spend time on. Find points of agreement. List points of disagreement, too.

3) Take Poythress's statements on p. 43 about the unity of salvation for the elect as a springboard for future discussion.<sup>35</sup> Explore the nature of the work of Christ toward the elect. What does Rom 5 teach about the application of the work of Christ? I would ask Poythress if it is absolutely necessary to make a salvatory unity an economic unity. We are all agreed on the salvatory unity. No question about that. But is it really undermined by seeing two tracks?

4) Do not forget the areas most of us agree on: inerrancy, the substitutionary work of Christ, and many others. Some of these are ultimately much more important and affect us more directly.

5) Dispensationalists should use constructive criticism from covenant theologians to reexamine the correspondence of their view with Scripture, and vice versa.

Just as it is true that to a great extent we are what we eat, we are what we assume. We all need to follow Holmes' advice: "It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data."

<sup>35</sup>"There can only be one people belonging to God, because there is only one Christ. Obviously this oneness works in a different way before the Incarnation and the Resurrection. It can have only a preliminary and shadowy form until Christ's work is actually accomplished. But we cannot think of the Old Testament people of God as a second people of God alongside the New Testament people of God. These are two successive historical phases of the manifestation of the corporate and community implications of Christ's representative headship.

... When it comes to human redemption, Romans 5:12-21 shows us the way we must think. It excludes in principle the idea of two parallel peoples of God, because the corporate unity of the people of God derives from their common representative Head."

## RESPONSE TO *UNDERSTANDING DISPENSATIONALISTS*, BY VERN S. POYTHRESS

ROBERT L. SAUCY

WE would like to begin by expressing our appreciation for the spirit evident throughout Dr. Poythress' work. While he definitely seeks to call in question the crucial tenets of dispensationalism, he does so with a gentle irenic spirit inviting dialogue rather than defensive rebuff. It is no doubt this spirit which gives one the impression that the work is a genuine attempt to understand dispensationalism and to present it fairly. We recognize the problems inherent in seeking to present a portrait of dispensationalism today in light of the considerable diversity which has developed over the past years. If there is any weakness in the portrayal of dispensationalism in the work, it is a tendency at times to deal with some issues that in our mind do not seem to be prevalent among most contemporary dispensationalists including those more traditionally oriented. For example, if I am not mistaken, both Ryrie and Pentecost, although affirming an eternal distinction between Israel and the church do not include a final earthly and heavenly destiny in that distinction. It is questionable therefore that they should be included in the category of D-theologians whose primary commonality is stated to be "parallel-but-separate roles and destinies of Israel and the church" (p. 9).

One might also wonder about some of the dimensions described as social forces at work among dispensationalists. For example, we would have appreciated more evidence that it is in response to the exactness of science that dispensationalists seek a greater precision in biblical language (pp. 57-58). At least as good a case can be made that the more literal approach was in reaction to the spiritualizing of much of prophecy in connection with a prevalent post-millennialism in the early part of the 19th century (cf. G. E. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* [Eerdmans, 1956], p. 43). But these are relatively minor questions of an overall fair presentation.

## I. POINTS OF AGREEMENT

Before dealing specifically with the points of contention, we would like to give some indication of where we are coming from by noting some of the major areas included in the work with which we are in substantial agreement.

First, we agree that there is finally one people of God. Believing Jews and Gentiles are permanently united as "one new Man" in Christ (Eph 2:15). This is in accord with the OT prophecies that pictured the salvation of God going to the Gentiles as well as to Israel in the messianic era. In saying that there is one people of God, we are talking about a spiritual unity. This oneness, according to our understanding, does not rule out the historical functional distinction between the church and Israel. Even as there can be functional distinctions between men and women, or church elders and others in the church, without destroying spiritual equality and oneness, so there is a distinction in the historical plan of God between Israel and the church. This allows for a future for Israel as a nation among nations in accordance to the basic picture of the messianic times according to the Old Testament.

Secondly, we agree that the messianic era has been inaugurated in some sense by the first coming of Christ. Consequently, we would affirm in distinction to much of earlier dispensationalism, that this present age is the beginning of the fulfillment of promises related to the messianic kingdom foretold in the OT. This present fulfillment is primarily limited to the promise of spiritual salvation found in the new covenant (i.e., the forgiveness of sins and spiritual renewal through the indwelling Spirit). According to OT prophecies the salvation of God was to go to the Gentiles as well as to Israel. This is taking place today, albeit in a way not clearly seen in the OT.

We agree with the position presented by Hoekema in his work, *The Bible and the Future*, which Dr. Poythress quotes favorably, that the OT presented the messianic kingdom in connection with an undifferentiated coming of the Messiah. The NT separates the fulfillment of the kingdom prophecies into stages. In distinction to Hoekema and the position of this work which presents only two stages, this age and the eternal state, we would simply argue for an additional millennial stage which in our opinion better encompasses all of the prophecies.

In the third place, we agree that it is difficult to define what is meant by "literal" interpretation and to determine when something is to be interpreted with more than a "flat" meaning. I do not believe that this problem is unique to dispensationalism, however. I would also doubt that dispensationalists can be charged generally with determining this issue by their system anymore than non-dispensationalists,



especially in light of the vastness of OT prophetic material which is viewed through the lens of a non-dispensational interpretation of the NT.

Without denying the significance and difficulty of fully grasping the proper hermeneutics of Scripture, especially the prophetic material, we would suggest that our differences do not finally lie in any distinct hermeneutical apriori. Both dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists transcend the immediate "flat" meaning of a given passage on the ground that their exegesis of other portions of Scripture (generally using the "flat" meaning) demands something additional be seen in the passage under question. The difference finally stems from the fact that the non-dispensationalist, with the use of essentially the same hermeneutical principles as the dispensationalist, understands the NT as teaching the fulfillment of messianic kingdom promises of the OT in a way different from the dispensationalist. This difference then calls for a different interpretation or reinterpretation of the OT prophecies.

## II. POINTS AT ISSUE

### A. The question of the typological and symbolic in the relation of prophecy to fulfillment.

Turning to some points at issue with Dr. Poythress' work, we would like to begin with what seems to be the crucial issue, namely, the whole question of the typological and symbolic in relation to prophecy and its fulfillment. In our reading of the work, what seemed to be suggested in many areas was a basic principle that the whole of OT prophecy that has to do with material historical earthly realities (e.g., animal sacrifices, priesthood, the temple, the nation of Israel, Jerusalem, and the land of Palestine) is to be seen as symbolic and typical and therefore superseded with the appearance of the promised eschatological reality in Christ. The prophecies related to spiritual realities associated with the salvation of the new covenant, on the other hand, come over into the era of fulfillment essentially without change. It is acknowledged that some material fulfillment will occur, but this primarily awaits the new earth and then it will be quite different from the historical picture of the prophecies.

We would like to respond to this general perspective of the symbolic and typical nature of OT prophecies with two thoughts.

1. First, we would suggest that all material realities are not necessarily types. In this same connection we would also feel that some distinction needs to be made between type and symbol. If by type we mean that which is done away with or superseded by the appearance of the antitype, then type must be distinguished from

symbol, for a symbol does not necessarily stand in this same relation to the reality which it symbolizes. In other words, a symbol can and in fact does exist alongside the corresponding reality. Today we have both the eschatological reality of new covenant salvation and its symbols in the bread and cup of the Lord's Table. It is difficult to say that these symbols lose their significance when the reality appears. One might also refer to the symbol of the rainbow. Is it not possible that even in the final state of the new earth that some material objects will stand as symbols, or we might even say as sacraments, in relation to spiritual realities?

While much of OT revelation may be "preliminary and shadowy in character" (p. 114), it seems impossible to apply these words to its entirety. Since we would all agree that the predictions of spiritual salvation as well as the new heavens and earth are not really transcended by NT reality, the question then becomes one of distinguishing what is typical and therefore superseded and what is not. We would suggest one distinction in that the realities which partake of redemption or regeneration are not typical or symbolic in the sense of being shadows which are eliminated with the coming of reality. For example, the present earth is not typical of the new earth in the same sense as the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant. Our present bodies are not typical of our new bodies which we will someday receive. In the same vein, we would argue that earthly Jerusalem is not typical of the final new Jerusalem in the sense of having lost its present historical significance. These historical realities would seem to retain their significance, perhaps one could say forever. At least they remain meaningful during their existence within history before they are transformed by the eschatological reality in accordance with God's timetable.

We would therefore argue that Israel is not a type in the sense of being superseded by something else. Without question there were elements within Israel's history which were typical, but to suggest that Israel's priestly ministry was in the category of Aaron's priesthood seems contrary to Scripture. The Old Covenant ministry was predicted to give way to a new covenant even in the OT. But these same prophecies applied this new covenant to a future repentant Israel which was understood as a nation among Gentile nations and not the supranational entity of today's church.

We would concur that the ultimate priestly ministry has been accomplished in Christ. But this no more eliminates a priestly ministry for Israel in the future, as is suggested (cf. pp. 101-3), than the reality of Christ's priestly ministry eliminates the present priestly ministry of the church (cf. 1 Pet 2:5, 9). In other words, the fulfillment of the OT

typical priestly ministry under the Aaronic priesthood with the work of Christ and the final reality of that priesthood does not rule out the existence of what might be termed an instrumental priestly ministry until the full promised eschatological salvation is complete in the eternal state.

If the church today can have a legitimate priestly function, there is no reason based upon the coming of the reality of the priesthood of Christ to deny such a ministry to the nation of Israel in the future. In fact, the apostle Paul suggests as much in Romans 11 when he speaks of the vastly greater blessing yet in store for the world in relation to Israel's fulfillment or acceptance with God (vv 12, 15).

2. The second thing to be noted in response to this fundamental issue of typology and the fulfillment of prophecy is that the fact of our present coming to the reality of eschatological fulfillment in Christ does not mean that we have yet reached the consummation of those prophecies. The present existence of the heavenly Jerusalem and our relation to it described in Hebrews 12 is said to be analogous to the situation concerning sacrifices. Dr. Poythress writes, "Can we draw an analogy between the situation concerning sacrifices and the situation concerning Jerusalem? The heavenly Jerusalem in Hebrews 12 exists by virtue of the presence of Christ as high priest with his sprinkled blood (Heb 12:24). Hence it would appear to be the antitype to which the OT historical Holy City, Jerusalem, pointed as a type. Therefore we may also expect that it is simultaneously the fulfillment of prophecies about a perfect, restored Jerusalem (Isa 60:14; Mic 4:1-2)" (pp. 119-20).

But the truth of the matter is that the heavenly Jerusalem has not yet finally come. According to Revelation 21 it is yet to come to earth. While we might debate the time, all would acknowledge this fact. Thus the teaching of Hebrews that we have in the present age come to the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22-23), cannot be understood as saying that we have reached the complete fulfillment of the prophecies. Saying this makes it evident that, although we have come to the final reality to which the OT prophecies looked forward, this reality is actually fulfilled in stages. Clearly we are not actually in the heavenly Jerusalem which will one day become the new Jerusalem on the new earth.

Thus there is today a period when the eschatological reality is present on earth, not yet in its fullness, but nevertheless in reality. During this time the earthly realities of the church, made up of yet imperfect saints, and its priesthood still have meaning and significance. Their significance is not swallowed up by the reality and perfection of the heavenly city. If such is the case, there can be no

reason in principle why Israel could not also exist as a historical reality with a real historical function, even as the church, during a period of time before the ultimate perfection.

B. The question of the number of stages in the eschatological salvation.

The recognition by dispensationalist and non-dispensationalist alike that the eschatological salvation is actually accomplished in stages, brings us to a second point of issue with Dr. Poythress' work, that is, the question of how many stages are involved. Agreement on a present initial stage fulfillment of the eschatological promises and a unified spiritual people of God does eliminate many differences between dispensationalism and non-dispensationalism. But in our opinion, the question of the millennium still looms rather large, perhaps larger than is suggested by Dr. Poythress. To us the suggestion that seeing a real connection between the present time and the eternal state and viewing the latter time (if we can say time) as the fulfillment of the remainder of the messianic prophecies is inadequate for at least two reasons.

1. First, the OT picture of the messianic period seems to include a situation in which the Messiah is reigning in a yet imperfect world. One such example may be noted in Isa 2:2-4 and its parallel in Mic 4:1-3. Although Dr. Poythress includes the latter passage in relation to prophecies about "a perfect, restored Jerusalem" (p. 120), the immediate context portrays conditions which are not yet perfect. For example, God is said to "judge between the nations and . . . render decisions for many peoples" (Isa 2:4). Interpreting this as God's action through the Messiah, non-dispensationalist E. J. Young explains the meaning of these statements by saying, "God is now represented as one who in a peaceful manner intervenes in the disputes of nations, and settles them so that the nations change the implements of war into utensils of peace. . . ." Concerning the Messiah's rendering decisions for many peoples, Young notes further that this ". . . pictures the LORD in the position of Judge and Arbiter who pronounces decisions concerning the nations and their disagreements" (*The Book of Isaiah*, NICOT [Eerdmans, 1965], p. 107). To say the least, this prophecy is difficult to apply to the present work of Christ in the world, and it would seem impossible to see Christ performing these tasks in a perfect sinless state. These and many other Scriptures which picture Christ judging and disciplining those who refuse to obey his kingship (e.g., Psalm 72; Isa 11:1-9; Zechariah 14) are difficult to fit into a two stage fulfillment. But they are perfectly in harmony with the viewpoint that the eschatological promises involve three stages, i.e., this present age, the millennium, and the final state of perfection. Many other aspects of the prophecies which almost all

OT theologies describe as the OT prophetic hope, including the restoration and preeminence of the nation of Israel as a means of blessing for all nations, fit the picture of a future millennial stage as well. In our opinion, there does not seem to be any compelling teaching either in the OT or the NT which necessitates a rather radical reinterpretation of this prophetic picture. These earthly realities involving Israel and the nations seem just as possible within the stages of eschatological salvation as the present earthly realities of the church and its ministry.

2. The concept of the realities involved in the OT picture raises our second objection to a two stage eschatology, and that is the nature of salvation brought about under the messianic reign of Christ. A two stage amillennial theology as represented in this work and others seeks to save the prophecies concerning societal peace and prosperity for the eternal state rather than force their application to this age through a spiritualizing hermeneutic. My problem with this approach is that if the second coming of Christ inaugurates the final consummative stage of perfection or eternity, then according to the apostle Paul this stage occurs after the Messiah hands over the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor 15:24). If it is only the eternal state that brings open peace and righteousness among the peoples of the world, then this societal salvation would not seem to be a part of the work of the Messiah in his messianic office, for the delivering up of the kingdom to the Father represents the completion of the mediatorial work of Christ. As Fee says, it signifies "... the Messiah's bringing to completion his work of redemption" (Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT [Eerdmans, 1987], p. 756). We would argue that the redemptive work of the Messiah involves not only a personal inner spiritual salvation, but a socio-political salvation as well. If such is the case, this latter salvation must be accomplished before the end when the kingdom is transferred to the Father and Christ's kingdom is merged into the eternal kingdom of God. The fullness of the Messiah's salvation, therefore, seems to cry out for another stage following the present divine activity of this period, namely a millennial time, which falls clearly under the reign of Christ before his work is complete and the kingdom is handed over to the Father.

Dr. Poythress addresses many other topics related to the discussion that we cannot get into in this response. We have simply chosen to address some of the broad issues which seem central to the dialogue. In conclusion, we would like to thank Dr. Poythress for his work. It is just such a desire to understand the other's position and the gentle spirit of rapprochement that one finds in this work which will help us all to understand the truth of Scripture more fully.





## RESPONSE TO PAUL S. KARLEEN'S PAPER "UNDERSTANDING COVENANT THEOLOGIAN'S"

VERN S. POYTHRESS

*The Dispensational Study Group meeting November 16, 1989, in San Diego has chosen as a topic for discussion the book of Vern S. Poythress, Understanding Dispensationalists (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987). Paul S. Karleen and Robert Saucy were invited to prepare written responses to the book. Paul Karleen's written response is found in his paper, "Understanding Covenant Theologians: A Study in Presuppositions." On the basis of the written paper, sent to me beforehand, I was invited to give a brief response during the meeting, November 16, 1989. The following written material constitutes the substance of my response.*

*It is understood that my response to this and to an analogous paper by Robert Saucy is to be followed by open discussion. Due to the circumstances, my response is tentative in nature, and open to correction in the light of the discussion.*

\* \* \*

I am delighted to be able to be at this meeting of the Study Group. Thank you to Drs. Craig Blaising and Gerry Breshears for inviting me to speak. I will be happy if my book may be of some use in furthering your discussions.

Now let me turn to Dr. Karleen's paper. There is much in his paper with which I can agree. In particular, as Karleen affirms, consciousness of our presuppositions and larger systematic convictions can help in refining our interpretation of Scripture (pp. 2-5). We must be aware of the possibility of unjustified circular reasoning.

I might go on dealing with areas of agreement, but it will probably be most useful for me to concentrate on two areas of Karleen's paper where there may be some remaining difficulty: what is the nature of "a physical kingdom on earth for Israel" (p. 6); and

whether "salvatory unity of the elect" implies "economic/historic/prophetic unity" (p. 9). On these points I now realize that my book was not as clear as it could be, and not nearly as fully developed as it could be. I think that Karleen has advanced the discussion, and has advanced my own understanding, by drawing attention to these points.

There is also a third issue, namely, whether covenant theology and dispensational theology represent a polarity or a continuum (p. 5). We can discuss this issue if there is time. For the moment, I want to concentrate on the primary questions.

#### A PHYSICAL KINGDOM ON EARTH FOR ISRAEL

First, Karleen argues that "the issue is a physical kingdom on earth for Israel" (p. 6). I agree. Unfortunately, Karleen misunderstands my own position, because I discussed it all too briefly in my book (pp. 123–25, 49–50). I myself believe in "a physical kingdom on earth for Israel." In a passage of unconditional prophecy Isaiah says, "Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land for ever" (Isa 60:21). Since the promise is unconditional, it must be fulfilled. Any denial of this fulfillment is highly abhorrent. Many covenant theologians do appear to deny it, and in this they are grievously wrong.

But the theology of the new earth by an amillennialist like Anthony Hoekema changes the scene completely. The new earth constitutes the consummate earthly fulfillment of great swaths of OT prophecy. Moreover, this new earth is seen as a transformation and renovation of the present heaven and earth, rather than starting completely over. Thus it is very much like the millennial earth as envisioned by most premillennialists. I see it to be a comparatively minor dispute as to whether this renovation of earth, following the Second Coming, comes in one stage or two, that is, in a 1000 year millennium followed by a fuller renewal or by total renewal all at once.

Karleen is correct: many covenant theologians deserve to be criticized on this subject. But some dispensationalists also deserve criticism. For one thing, some appear to deny that Jewish Christians will possess the land. But the promise says, "And I will give to you, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Gen 17:8). Surely this promise includes Jewish Christians, because they are Abraham's descendants and God is their God. Consider also the fact that Abraham never inherited the land during his lifetime on earth. So he must inherit it when he receives his resurrection body. Hence having a resurrection body is no barrier to inheritance either to him or to his Jewish Christian descendants.

Some dispensational theologians have also apparently denied the eternality of the kingdom promises. They have talked as if the kingdom and the inheritance are for 1000 years *only*. But the OT repeatedly speaks of an everlasting possession. Moreover, in Isa 9:7 Isaiah says, "Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from this time forth and for evermore" (Isa 9:7). This passage clearly teaches that the Davidic throne and kingdom has no end. It must therefore include the renewed earth. The everlastingness of the possession is also reasserted in Isa 60:21, 25:7-8, and other Isaianic passages building on Isaiah 9.

There is still perhaps an interesting difference of perception between covenantal and dispensational theologians. Many covenantal theologians might consider that the question of the church's participation in prophetic fulfillment—which they see as integrally bound up with the idea of one vs. two peoples of God—is the primary issue. To put it in Karleen's terms, they are likely to say that the issue is whether the physical kingdom for Israel is for Israel to the exclusion of Gentiles. Karleen, on the other hand, along with many dispensational theologians, thinks that the main issue is premillennialism. I think that this difference may arise largely from differences in priorities of our concerns, and where we feel the most serious damage might be done. Amillennial covenantal theologians fear that damage might be done when Christians do not take to heart the hortatory implications of OT prophecy. Dispensational theologians fear that damage might be done when Christians do not take to heart the future, physical realization of prophecy after the Second Coming. Hence each draws the battle-lines to express his concern.

I think that such a difference is likely to remain a source of potential misunderstanding for a good while to come. However, I would argue that certain possible changes can help to protect against the dangers. On the one hand, more dispensationalists are affirming that Christians participate in the fulfillment of OT prophecy. On the other, more amillennial covenantal theologians may come to adopt Anthony Hoekema's position.

#### THE NATURE OF UNITY OF PEOPLES

The second issue concerns the nature of unity of different peoples in salvation. Karleen maintains that there is "salvatory unity of the elect" (p. 9). He denies that such unity implies "economic/historic/prophetic unity" (p. 9). His formulation is helpful, and I wish that my book had been clearer on the issue. Unfortunately, he too quickly assumes that I take a position opposite to his.

Let us focus then on the question of economic, historic, and prophetic unity. I am not sure of the exact sense that he desires for these terms, so I will have to use them in a fairly prosaic way.

First of all, there is indeed economic diversity among the peoples of the world. They own different pieces of land and different cultural objects. I believe that this diversity of ownership extends into the renewed earth (Rev 21:24–26). The OT prophesies that there will be such diversity (Isa 60:5–7, 11–12; Ps 72:10–11). In the church there is also economic diversity. Some are rich, some poor. No one is required to put his possessions into a common pot.

Second, there is historic diversity. The different peoples of the earth have different origins and histories behind them. They inhabit different lands and have different cultures. These diversities, I believe, extend into the renewed earth, since the nations in their plurality and their kings are mentioned as separate groups (Rev 21:24–26). Their historic destiny in the future is also diverse, since that destiny includes use of their historic diversity arising from the past. OT prophecy also affirms this diversity (e.g., Isa 19:23–25). The church also is composed of a multitude of peoples. Jews are not required to abandon their customs and become Gentiles nor are Gentiles required to become Jews. Barbarians are not required to become Greeks. Each retains all that is genuinely good in their cultural, historic, and linguistic diversity.

Third, there is prophetic diversity. In OT prophecy Israel is repeatedly distinguished from the nations and the nations are repeatedly distinguished from one another. These diversities, I believe, last as long as the Davidic kingdom.

This prophetic diversity also touches on the church. The diversity of nations in OT prophecy is a necessary assumption by Paul in order to validate the fact that he takes the gospel to all nations and that all nations are to be blessed through the gospel (Acts 13:47; Gal 3:8).

... we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47).

The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you" (Gal 3:8).

The meaning of these passages is destroyed if the word for "nations" does not have its ordinary meaning both in the NT context and in the OT passages that are behind the quotes.

I was unclear in my own thinking on this issue until Karleen and Saucy challenged me on it. I tended to follow the discussions of some covenant theologians, who simply equated Israel with the church not in all respects but when eschatological prophecy mentioned Israel.

But such an equation is over-simple, in the light of the prophecies just cited. I now think that—possibly with some exceptions—eschatological prophecies mentioning Israel apply first of all to Christ the Israelite, then to Jewish Christians. Gentiles have come in to be fellow citizens with these Jews (Eph 2:19). The prophecies do not lose their connection with Jews, but gain by the inclusion of Gentiles among the children of Abraham. I would still say that the church is the people of God during the present age, but not in an undifferentiated sense. First Christ inherits the promises, then believing Jews, that is, believing Israel also. While this age lasts, more Jews continue to return to the Messiah and so inherit the promises. This inheritance of the promises is the heart of what it means for the church to be church.

The status of Gentiles is the problem. Paul indicates the solution. Believing Gentiles are so grafted into Christ that they become fellow heirs, while still remaining Gentiles. They do not have to adopt Jewish cultural and ethnic practices or OT ceremonial codes.

In sum, I believe that the church, the millennial kingdom, and the people of the renewed earth share in all the diversities of which Karleen speaks.

Then what was I after when I talked about “one people of God” (*UD*, p. 129)? In the light of the confusion, I wish that I had first talked about the many peoples of God—Jews, Greeks, Romans, Englishmen, Chinese, Bantu, and so on. Let me reformulate my view so that its alignment with NT teaching is clearer.

Concerning the saved peoples now on earth, the NT teaches that there is a fundamental religious and social unity. They all have God as Father, they are all united to Christ through the Holy Spirit, and they are all part of one spiritual family. They all have access to the Father through the one Spirit (Eph 2:18). They are “fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus” (Eph 3:6). And so on.

Some of the NT passages appear to me to have the character of an argument. You trust in Christ for salvation. Therefore, you have such-and-such religious privileges in common with fellow believers. I believe that these arguments are valid. Hence the arguments hold for believers in the millennium as well. Gal 3:6–29 is particularly important. Gal 3:8 indicates that those who are justified are justified through faith. Here are salvific blessings. Gal 3:28–29 indicates that these same people are one in Christ. The whole argument of Galatians 3 says that we know that they are one because the very nature of their justification and their salvation implies that it is so.

Some classical dispensational theologians appear to me to deny that the above elements of unity are an integral part of salvation, to be expected to hold true in the millennium. “Salvific” unity for them



would be very narrow. But then I have trouble. Are they doing justice to the arguments in Galatians 3 and Ephesians 2? In view of the diversities and even tensions between Jews and Gentiles, Paul had to argue his points, not merely assume them. And he seems to me to argue from the nature of salvation in Christ to unity. Isn't his argument valid? I want also to ask how people are justified if not in Christ (Gal 2:17). How are they sanctified if not by union with Christ's death and resurrection (Romans 6)? If they are united to Christ, are they not also united to one another? Talk about the unity of the way of salvation appears to me to become flimsy if it does not include what Paul actually says about the way of salvation.

Other dispensational theologians might affirm that all the above remain true in the millennium. Then in fundamental religious respects believing Jews and Gentiles remain equal in the millennium. It might still be true that Jews would live mostly in Palestine, and Gentiles would live mostly elsewhere. It might be true from a literal economic point of view that Jews would "possess" Palestinian land (but note Ezek 47:21-23 where Gentiles inherit land too). This situation would be more or less like the present situation, in which Gentile Christians own land here and there throughout the world, and Jewish Christians own land here and there; except that more Jews would be gathered in Palestine. All would have equal access to God the Father and to Christ. Hence the Jews' descent from Abraham would not provide them with distinct priestly privileges, not belonging to Gentile believers. Nor would their residence in Palestine mean that they thereby possess a uniquely holy land uniquely connected with access to God, in such a way as to exclude Gentile possession of holy land. Or so it seems to me. If this picture of the millennium is what dispensational theologians have in mind, I have little quarrel with it.

Up till now, many classical dispensational theologians have seemed to me to believe that in the millennium believing Jews have a unique status as a priestly people, a unique *religious* status, a status definitively distinguishing them from Gentile believers who do not have this same status and who are not a kingdom of priests. It is not merely the case that they possess distinctive lands and a distinctive past. The statements in Paul's letters are then seen as describing the unique constitution of the church, as a heavenly people, and as not relevant to the millennium. Thus they might complain about the lack of data supporting equality of religious status in the millennium. My difficulty is that I do not see how one can neatly divide up Paul between statements about our salvation and statements about our religious unity of privilege and our fellowship with others who are saved. Galatians 3 does not allow it. Go look again at everything that Paul says about union with Christ and being in Christ, and every-



thing John says about indwelling and love, and see whether you can do it.

Moreover, I do not see what is the warrant when some people disinherit the 12 Apostles and other Jewish Christians from the earthly Abrahamic promises. If the Jewish Christians *do* share those promises, it seems that either the Gentile Christians do too, or that Paul was ill advised not to encourage the Gentile Christians to become Jews so that they too might share in these extra blessings in the future.

The dilemma remains the same as I posed it in my book, quoting from Daniel P. Fuller:

While they [dispensationalists] wish to think of salvation as always administered in the same way [through faith in God's Word, and by the blood], yet they do not wish to carry this idea out to the logical conclusion that all saved persons will have the same status [Israel and the church alike] (Fuller, *Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism*, p. 178).

In the light of Karleen's remarks I would, however, wish to refine this statement by defining the "same status" as sameness religiously, the sameness of fundamental religious privileges, including equality of reception of the Spirit, being co-heirs of all religious blessings, priestly access to God and his dwelling, possession of qualifications of holiness, and possession of holy objects promoting access to God. In the present age, in the millennium, and in the new earth such sameness is quite compatible with the diversities that Karleen rightly wants to maintain.

I suspect that this issue is going to be a tangled one because it is connected with the relation of different spheres in OT revelation: religious, salvific, economic, historic, political, prophetic. All those are bound together in complex ways, and then how do they play out when we relate them across the discontinuities to the NT? And what do we understand to be the nature of the unity of the church? Are there corporate dimensions to salvation?

The phrase "unity of the covenant of grace" is slippery. I am sure that Karleen knows what he means, but we have to be careful because it could have at least three senses: (1) It could mean simply that there is one way of salvation through Christ, and that this one way can be summed up in covenantal terms. Thus the Westminster Confession of Faith says:

the Lord was pleased to make a second [covenant], commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained

unto eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe (7.3).

(2) It could mean in addition to (1) that unity of salvation extends to unity in economic/historic/prophetic terms for one saved people. (3) It could connote in addition to (2) that God's covenant with man is the basic overarching structuration of Scripture into which all of history is to be integrated, after the manner of Cocceius.

Karleen obviously affirms the unity in the sense (1) (see p. 12, 16n23). He disagrees with the unity in sense (2). In this connection Karleen objects to the circularity in my reasoning. "Instead of actually looking at the data, P simply brings back the covenant" (p. 9). think that Karleen is saying that I make a transition from (1) to (2) with no evidence. In fact, I do not support (2), so there is no circularity.

#### POLARITY VS. CONTINUUM

Karleen thinks that I place covenantal and dispensational theologians along a continuum, while he characterizes the difference as a polarity (p. 5). Maybe it depends on how broadly one defines covenantal or dispensational theology, and on what counts as a polarity.

In fact, both of these characterizations may be too simple. To be sure, the classical covenantal and dispensational theologies present themselves as rival global solutions. Each stands or falls as a whole. Moreover, at the present time most people informed on the issue find themselves most comfortable identifying primarily with one side. They think of themselves either as covenantal or as dispensational. To that extent, there is still a polarity. I wrote as I did, not to deny the extent of polarity, but to make people aware of the fact that modified options were opening up. Areas have been staked out between the classical positions.

To be sure, a good many people—perhaps Karleen among them—may believe that classic covenantal and dispensational positions each have some core presuppositions that are indispensable and that constitute the real genius of the positions. Modifications may still be made on the periphery, but such modifications must preserve the core under penalty of collapsing the whole system. Hence one must simply decide between the positions or construct a third option from scratch.

My response is, "Maybe." But at present I see things differently. I tend to think that classic covenantal and dispensational theology constitute a cluster of intertwined presuppositions or core beliefs—not just one such belief that is all-important. Surrounding this core are less important "auxiliary hypotheses." Modifiers of the classic positions are finding it possible to hold some but not all of the classic defining cluster, as well as to modify the auxiliary hypotheses. For

example, some modified dispensationalists believe in a physical millennial kingdom for Israel but see this result as consistent with basic affirmation of one people of God through history, and a participation of the church in the fulfillment of OT prophetic promise. Some covenant theologians like Anthony Hoekema believe in the physical realization of prophetic promises in a physical kingdom for Israel on a renewed earth. Moreover, some of these modifiers, from their new position, question whether some of the things that they hold in common with the classic position are as important to fight over as the classicists thought. With the change in position comes also a change in the perception of what is at the core and what is indispensable.

Maybe it is wisest not to characterize the present state of affairs as either a polarity or continuum. It is in some ways both. It depends to a certain extent on whether one focuses on the classic covenantal and dispensational positions or on the twentieth century modifiers.



## RESPONSE TO ROBERT L. SAUCY'S PAPER

VERN S. POYTHRESS

I have a large measure of agreement with Dr. Saucy's paper, and agree that he has put his finger on some points of weakness and unclarities in my book. I also agree that the two points that he singles out for major discussion are indeed significant (pp. 4-10). Let me take up his two points in order.

### THE TYPOLOGICAL AND SYMBOLIC

First, the question of the typological and symbolic. I agree that this question is complex, and that mere appeal to typological or symbolic dimensions of the OT does not answer many of our questions about the exact nature of future fulfillment. It is therefore difficult to find where Dr. Saucy and I substantially disagree. I do locate "some material fulfillment" in the new earth (p. 4). That new earth will be in many respects like the premillennialists' millennium, and so need not to be "quite different than the historical picture of the prophecies" (p. 4).

What, then, about the future role of Israel? My book was not as clear as it should have been. I think that it is true both that the church has a typological relation to OT Israel and that the Jews have a continuing distinct national identity alongside other nations. Moreover, believing Jews are to have a continuing priestly ministry, just as the other nations within the church do. My remaining question is whether this ministry will be effectively excluded to Gentiles. What I am against, as I indicate in my response to Karleen, is the exclusion of Gentiles rather than the inclusion of Israel.

With regard to the heavenly Jerusalem, I regret that on pp. 119-20 I did not make it clear that it is the present heavenly Jerusalem together with the future new Jerusalem that is the fulfillment, not the present Jerusalem alone. Saucy is quite right that my statement was one-sided.

## PREMILLENNIALISM

Saucy's second question is about the number of stages in eschatological fulfillment. Do we have two stages, namely, now and the new earth, or three, now, millennium (following the Second Coming), and new earth.

Saucy is technically correct: I presently hold a two-stage view. However, I do not think that this view is very clearly taught in the Bible. There are some passages that appear to point in that direction, but others, such as some cited by Saucy, appear to point toward premillennialism or postmillennialism. In the face of these difficulties, I would like to remain very open to changing my position. Premillennialism has been represented in the church at least since the second century, and continues to be the position of both dispensational theologians and some covenant theologians (including three members of the present faculty of WTS). Hence in my book I attempted to put the millennial dispute as far in the background as I reasonably could.

Under point 1, Saucy cites a number of passages that have traditionally been related to the millennial kingdom. I agree that they may have the implications that he envisions. Zechariah 14, if read in a straightforward manner, is particularly difficult for an amillennialist. In fact, if I were to defend premillennialism in a debate, I would probably choose Zechariah 14 as a main text. On the other hand, the fact that Zechariah 14 is apocalyptic means that it presents hermeneutical challenges. I am reluctant to put much weight on it.

Some of the other texts do not really pose a difficulty to an amillennialist of the new-earth type. As Saucy knows, such amillennialists see the language as a broad description of the nature of the coming of eschatological salvation. The passages are thus to be seen as relevant to the two or three eras involved, but not every detail of every passage is relevant in a straightforward, nonmetaphoric way to all of the eras. For example, the conflicts indicated in Isa 2:4a, Mic 4:3a, and Isa 11:4, might, in an amillennial scheme, be eliminated at the Second Coming, rather than before or after it.

Perhaps, then, the difference concerns questions of timing. I do not like to make too many assumptions about Dr. Saucy's position, but I can at least envision that dispensationalists might agree with much that I say about such prophecies. However, they would not be satisfied unless they could find at least one era in which the whole passage is realized all at once, in its most detailed and nonmetaphoric form. I understand this desire, but it seems inconsistent with the way in which dispensationalists have elsewhere maintained that two parts of a passage are realized in two distinct eras (e.g., Isa 61:1-2; 52:7-10?).

Under point 2, I do not see 1 Cor 15:24 as a significant objection. For one thing, it is precisely through Christ's work, in its social and



cosmic implications, including the Second Coming, that death is destroyed and the kingdom is brought to full realization. Hence the past work of Christ forms the indissoluble basis for the peace of the new earth. Rev 22:1 describes the throne of the new Jerusalem as the throne of God and the *Lamb*. The mention of the name of the Lamb seems to have the same implications. Thus I doubt whether amillennialists will agree with Saucy's claim that "If it is only the eternal state that brings open peace and righteousness among the peoples of the world, then this societal salvation would not seem to be a part of the work of the Messiah in his messianic office" (p. 10; cf. Isa 51:6).

Moreover, one must be careful about drawing implications from 1 Cor 15:24, or one will find oneself contradicting the eternal duration of the throne and kingdom of David, as it is asserted in Isa 9:7. I understand 1 Cor 15:24 as a description from the standpoint of Christ as the last Adam. The language in 15:25–27 goes back to Ps 8:6, which in turn reflects on the role of Adam and humanity represented by him. Adam was to offer all his labors as service to God. The completion of the task of humanity by Christ is fittingly crowned by the consummate act of worship, in which Christ as the head of the new humanity offers up the completed universe to God the Father in order that the Father may fill it with the consummate glory of his kingly presence and rule. Such an act does not necessarily imply the cessation of the rule of the incarnate Son, but rather the Father's word of approval, "Well done," and the consequent confirmation of the eternity of the reign of the incarnate Son.

Hence, I believe that 1 Cor 15:24 is effectively neutral with respect to the premillennial/amillennial/postmillennial issue.



## DISPENSATIONAL STUDY GROUP DISCUSSION

The meeting was given to a discussion of Vern Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalism*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. Papers of response were prepared and read by Dr. Paul Karleen and Dr. Robert Saucy. Dr. Poythress prepared and read responses. The three men were joined by Dr. Craig Blaising, chairman of the Dispensational Study Group, for a panel discussion with questions from the floor. Approximately 100 people participated in the session.

The following is a summary of the panel discussion and question period.

Dr. Blaising asked if moderate Ds and moderate Cs are not closer to each other than either are to classic Ds or classic Cs. It seems both are moving toward each other in rapprochement. That was generally agreed.

He also asked how common Hoekema's version of amillennialism (which Dr. Poythress shares) is. Dr. Poythress noted old C was oriented toward salvific issues so eschatological, prophetic questions were not central to the discussions. With the new discussions arising from biblical theology and the relevant appreciation of biblical diversity, there has been renewed discussion of prophetic issues. Many covenantalists see this more as new areas of discussion than as concessions or movement. He noted his book *Symphonic Theology* with its discussions of the legitimacy of multiple approaches to theological thinking.

Does Dr. Poythress have a presupposed covenant of grace in his theology as Dr. Karleen suggests? He responded that he sees it taught in the Bible, but that Dr. Karleen is right that he works out from the salvific issues to the prophetic and other issues.

Is history the realm in which God's purposes are fulfilled rather than in eternity, the new heavens and new earth? Dr. Poythress responded that he sees a continuity with this earth. If there is radical disjunction between this earth and the new earth, then this is a large objection to amillennialism. The Davidic kingdom does represent a historical continuity from the present history to the eternal state which is without end. Further, Isaiah 65 shows a considerable continuity

with the past, present and future earth. Similarly, the empty tomb shows both continuity and discontinuity of present and future body.

Dr. Poythress laughingly referred to himself as an optimistic premillennialist: It is so good that it goes on forever.

Dr. Karleen agreed to the weakness of a temporal Davidic kingdom, one limited only to millennium.

Dr. Blaising described classic Ds as seeing the new earth basically in Platonic terms, as timelessness. The modified Ds are seeing temporality in the new earth. Thus the argument that promises must be fulfilled in history because the new earth is not temporal is not valid. So the argument is that there must be a phase of kingdom where a different kind of promise can be fulfilled.

Dr. Saucy sees the blurring of millennium and new earth in Isaiah 65 as a result of the complete fulfillment of God. However, he sees a discontinuity when God finishes His work of reconciliation. In the amillennial understanding, the Lord smashes all opposition and the new earth is begun. The Romans 11 portrait where Israel brings tremendous blessing to all nations also needs a time frame where the earth is ruled by humans in righteousness under Christ's mediatorial reign followed by a giving to the Father in 1 Corinthians 15.

Dr. Poythress noted if there is present fulfillment of prophecy, then the difference is one of degree rather than of kind in fulfillment. He cited Ridderbos and Murray in their treatments of Romans 11. He also sees more possibility for postmillennialism as he thinks further.

There is certainly not a simple alternative between dispensational and covenant theologies. When is a D not a D? What defines a D? Last year's discussion focused on a national future for Israel in history and a really new event happening at Pentecost forming the body of Christ.

Do D's have a different hermeneutic? Virtually all agree that there is not. The point is a different outcome because of different assumptions in the thinking rather than a different hermeneutical approach. Dr. Saucy noted that it is not too difficult to see why in early history the church took over for Israel in light of the judgment on Israel and its end as a nation. Presently the holocaust and founding of Israel has brought up the question of Israel with renewed impact, causing all people to reevaluate their understanding of prophecy concerning a national future for Israel.

What distinctions between peoples exist in the new earth? Dr. Poythress affirmed ethnic differences with spiritual, religious, priestly unity, but noted lack of information as to specifics of the distinction. The cultural diversities of present day church may be a foretaste of the future diversity. To be human means having an individuality of identity which forms a part of our destiny where we uniquely reflect

the glory of Christ forever. The picture of thrones, knowing each other, and fellowship shows a saving of the entire person with personal memories and unique personality going into eternity. The Jews are not only one nation among nations, but a unique nation from whom Messiah came. Jews do not lose their Jewishness in the future life. They do come into the new earth Christian Jews, integrated into the unity of the body of Christ.

What can't I believe and still be a dispensationalist? A fascinating question which should be the topic of further thought.

What are the basic presuppositions in language? Don't we assume ordinary commonality in language, leading to a "common sense," literal hermeneutic. No specific response was given. It seemed evident that it is so.

Aren't there really different hermeneutics between classic D and classic C? Probably so.

Ladd said he could not understand the OT only in light of the OT. Only in light of the NT can one properly understand the OT. Dr. Poythress responded that this classic polarization is too simple. The eschatological material is somewhat open-ended. It is like an out of focus camera lens where details are not clear until the NT sharpens the focus. It is like trying to understand Gen 3:15 in its own light. How much enlightening is needed? It is a frightfully difficult question. He suggested reading the OT first in its own light and then in light of the NT, with neither approach overwhelming the other. In his own experience, the NT has opened his eyes to see what was there in the OT all the time. The NT brings out the depth inherent in the OT, expressed there symbolically. Symbolic depth in tabernacle, for example, foreshadows the majesty of God's heavenly tabernacle. But the details of the working out are still unclear. He feels loosened up in his interpretation of OT prophecy. The fuzzy dimensions suggested in the OT are now seen more clearly.

Dr. Saucy agreed with Ladd that the NT teachers are his authority for how to interpret the OT. We cannot disagree with their interpretation. "What do the apostles teach?" is the question. We all start with the flat meaning. That does not rule out figures, of course. We should stay with the flat meaning unless some other flat meaning forces us to eliminate it. Does the NT force us to give up a national future for Israel? No. Dr. Saucy allows history into new earth. If Israel does not fulfill OT prophecy now, and there is no priestly distinction in new earth, then there must be a millennial stage to allow this fulfillment. Dr. Karleen agrees to stay with flat until forced. But we must be moved by the text, not presuppositions.

Dr. Poythress sees a possible difference here. What happens when metaphors are not so obvious? He sees some of the places where this is the case as noted in the book. He does not operate under

force, but under what seems to be best in light of the text. There was some irony in his voice as he heard himself use phrases very like classic Ds might.

Dr. Saucy agrees that there are allusions, illustrations, but does not see NT negating the promise for a national future for Israel.

Dr. Blaising noted that literal hermeneutic died as an issue with development of science of hermeneutics. Preunderstanding of interpreter significantly affects what is understood to be the clear meaning of the text. How is it that the one in a tradition emphasizing the clear meaning looks back on what was clear a generation ago and finds it not clear at all? What forced that change?

What demands that one begin with NT rather than following a chronological order, correcting only as forced? Dr. Poythress sees a spiral process where one asks God in all parts of the Bible what is correct. Where one starts is not all that essential as long as spiral continues. Everyone begins with Christ and experience of Christianity in their personal interpretative history—as did the Apostles. But that is not a definitive ordering. He referred to his article in Westminster Journal concerning the divine author's meaning in the text.

Respectfully submitted,

Gerry Breshears  
Secretary



# WHERE'S THE CHURCH? THE CHURCH AS THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF DISPENSATIONAL THEOLOGY

MICHAEL D. WILLIAMS

*Paul addressed the church as a concrete assembly, an assembly which functions as the representative of the rule of God within our world. That assembly is an essential constituent of the believer's salvation and subsequent sanctification. The classical dispensationalist distinction between Israel and the church as belonging to different metaphysical realms, however, has worked to the detriment of dispensational ecclesiology. The combination of an overemphasis upon the individual believer and the church as a transcendent, mystical body has tended to view the concrete this-worldly assembling of the body of Christ as relatively unimportant. When the true distinction between Israel and the church is seen to be historical rather than metaphysical, the church, as the historical, visible body of Christ, becomes the centerpiece of God's dealings with the world during the present dispensation.*

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## INTRODUCTION

DISPENSATIONAL theology has often been depicted by its opponents as an anti-church theology. The liberal theologian, George Ricker Berry, writing in the 1920's concluded that dispensationalism depreciates the church and its relationship to the redemptive purposes of God through an inordinate importance upon Israel in its eschatology and an antithetical mind set that either compartmentalizes biblical magnitudes (Israel/church) or pits them against one another (heaven/earth). Berry wrote that the Jews "continue to keep forever their position as the chosen nation of special privilege. The Christian church thus becomes really subordinate to the Jewish nation."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>George Ricker Berry, *Premillennialism and Old Testament Prediction* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1929) 19. Berry claimed that because dispensationalism thinks

This charge did not present a major problem for dispensational theology. The dispensationalist could accept the charge as true, provided that one restricted the church as it is articulated in the charge to a this-worldly entity. Classical dispensationalists such as C. I. Scofield and Lewis Sperry Chafer were no more enamored with the denominational and sectarian realities of modern Christendom than John Nelson Darby had been with the Established Church of his day. They held that the church as an institution in this world cannot help but participate in the ruin of the world-system, and will ultimately be replaced upon the stage of world history by the earthly people of God—Israel. The elevation of Israel, however, was never an end in itself for dispensationalism. Rather, it operated as a foil for ecclesiology, and especially for the explication of the greater heavenly glory of the true body of Christ. The elevation of Israel was not meant to disparage the church. Classical dispensationalists held that the church is heavenly and as such enjoys a heavenly glory as the body and bride of Christ. These blessings are as much greater than Israel's as heaven is above the earth. Chafer did not think that he was denigrating the church at all, but indeed elevating her to her proper heavenly position. Perhaps no one has captured the dispensationist logic here better than the Reformed theologian Oswald T. Allis when he discerningly wrote:

All the earthly promises are given to earthly Israel, that the heavenly glory of the Church may be rendered distinctive. Times and seasons, human history and its happenings, are given to Israel, or rather to Israel and the professing church, that the expectancy of the any moment rapture may be cherished by the Church without the intrusion of any hampering or hindering events.<sup>2</sup>

The charge that dispensationalism represents an anti-church theology has recently been reprised by Millard Erickson. Erickson's

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of the church as an intercalation, it forms no part of the main redemptive stream which is located in Israel. The emphasis upon the national restoration of Israel and her eschatological redemptive role de-emphasizes the church and the triumph of the cross. The church is a temporary and flawed instrument which is doomed to failure and ultimate judgment. The church will end in failure and be replaced by political Israel, who will succeed where the church could not. Berry, of course, was not alone in making the charge that dispensationalism elevates Israel over the church. Cf. Harris Franklin Rall, *Premillennialism and the Christian Hope* (New York: Abingdon, 1920) 102–3; W. D. Chamberlain, "Dispensationalism," in *The Church Faces the Isms*, ed. by Arnold B. Rhodes (New York: Abingdon, MCMLVIII) 100–107; Clarence Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism: Its Historical Genesis and Ecclesiastical Implications* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960) 29–30; William E. Cox, *Biblical Studies in Final Things* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: 1966) 49; William E. Cox, *Why I Left Scofieldism* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978) 7–9.

<sup>2</sup>Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978) 219–20.

version is not easily dispatched, however, because it directs its criticism at the dispensationalist undertaking of the invisible church. The problem within dispensational ecclesiology, as Erickson sees it, is that it over-emphasizes the transcendent, mystical body of Christ to the ultimate devaluation or neglect of the visible, historical church. Erickson deals with dispensational ecclesiology under what he calls the "pietistic approach to the church." He comments:

The emphasis here is upon the individual's direct relationship to God through Jesus Christ. It is that and that alone which makes one a Christian. And it is the presence of such believers, regenerate persons, that properly constitutes a group as a church. Note that in this view those who are savingly related to Christ make up the Church, whether or not they are assembled into any visible group. Membership in a visible group is no guarantee whatsoever of justification in God's sight, so the visible organization is relatively unimportant . . . Church membership, as a permanent commitment to a given group of believers, is minimized in this individualistic approach.<sup>3</sup>

Erickson's claim is that dispensationalism has so emphasized the individual believer and the church as the transcendent, mystical body of Christ that the believer's this-worldly inclusion in the visible church is minimized to the point of unimportance.

It is my contention that Erickson's version of the charge is correct. My thesis here is that the church as the concrete assembling of the body of Christ, the body of believers that you or I assemble with as the church, and the churches that Paul wrote his letters to, has tended to be of negligible importance in dispensational theology. That is to say, that which is commonly called 'the visible church' is at best considered a mere convenience for the individual believer during his earthly sojourn, and at worst is looked upon as a theologically impotent human construction. My purpose in this paper is both to quantify that charge and suggest that ecclesiology remains as a primary item of unfinished business for dispensational theology.

#### THE CHURCH AS AN OTHERWORLDLY ENTITY

##### *The Christian as Heavenly Citizen*

Following a metaphysical distinction between Israel and the church which understands the former as the earthly people of God and the latter as a heavenly people, classical dispensationalists contended that the Christian has been translated into the kingdom of God and thus is not a part of this world. "The individual believer is in

<sup>3</sup>Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985) 1045.

the world," Scofield said, "but not of it. It is a scene through which he is passing and his attitude towards it should be that of his Lord and his apostles." The Christian's true home is in heaven. His citizenship has been changed by regeneration from earth to heaven.<sup>4</sup> As a citizen of heaven, a member of the new creation, the believer is qualitatively distinguished from the world and all things within it. The new creation is a completely "new order of beings," "a new classification of humanity," according to Chafer.<sup>5</sup> The new creation is not creation restored; it is rather a brand new, alternative creation. "Regeneration is a *creation*," Scofield claimed, "not a *transformation*; the bringing in of a new thing, not the change of an old."<sup>6</sup> The new birth is not merely a birth "from above" (ἄνωθεν in John 3:3) for Scofield and Chafer, but is also a birth *for above*. The cross of Jesus Christ has produced "a distinct heaven-borne people." The unfortunate but inescapable conclusion to be drawn here is that Scofield and Chafer thought of grace in primarily metaphysical rather than moral terms.

The Christian is *in* the world, but is not *of* the world. Chafer was extremely fond of this construction and returned to it again and again. Though the believer still exists in the world, he does so merely as a stranger and a sojourner. He is an alien in a foreign polity. Grace separates him from all complicity with the world or the *cosmos*-system. As a "heavenly citizen," the Christian belongs to another sphere of existence.

A decidedly other-worldly strain of religion now becomes apparent in the thought of Scofield and Chafer. That other-worldliness was demanded by their theological commitments. A theology that was built primarily upon metaphysical distinctions made it incumbent upon Chafer to say that the redeemed man is totally otherworldly. "In the sight of God," the nationality of the believer is heavenly. All promises, possessions and positions which pertain to him are likewise heavenly. The Christian possesses no land, no earthly city, no earthly kingdom, and no earthly king.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup>C. I. Scofield, *Dr. C. I. Scofield's Question Box*, Compiled by Ella E. Pohle (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Assoc., 1917) 35. Darby wrote that the church is "something apart—a kind of heavenly people," quoted in Bass, 130.

<sup>5</sup>Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1947) 4.12, 29, 386 (hereafter referred to as *ST*); Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Grace: The Glorious Theme* (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Assoc., 1922) 354.

<sup>6</sup>C. I. Scofield, *The Comprehensive Bible Correspondence Course* (New York: Francis E. Fitch, 1896) 1.30.

<sup>7</sup>Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Bible Themes* (Wheaton, Van Kampen, 1926) 207; Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Satan and the Satanic System: An Exhaustive Examination of the Scripture Teaching from Genesis to Revelation* (New York: D. T. Bass, 1909) 44; *ST* 1.39–40. Chafer's use of the words "world" and "*kosmos*" are confusing at best. It

Saved *out* of the world, the Christian is brought into the family and life of God. Salvation for Chafer was not a mere restoration to prelapsarian moral purity but an ontic elevation of the redeemed person above his former status. Chafer understood salvation not as restoration but release, elevation above one's former estate. The regeneration of the Holy Spirit does not restore or renew human nature for an existence of service and worship in the world. The new birth does not humanize man under such a view. Chafer proclaimed that by a "mighty transformation," by a birth from above, the believer is metamorphosed into a third order of being. Besides the Jew and the Gentile, both of which are denizens of the earth, there is now the Christian, a "celestial being." Receiving the life of the Spirit of God, the believer, "enters upon a career thereby in the realm of relationship which belongs to another sphere of existence," wrote Chafer. As a citizen of heaven, the believer's "name would, therefore, appear only as among the celestial beings, in any true census of the universe."<sup>8</sup>

### *The Church as Transcendent, Mystical Organism*

Scofield and Chafer were as unequivocal regarding the heavenly nature of the church as they were of the essentially heavenly nature of the believer. "Called-out" from the world, the church is "a unique body, segregated from the mass into a distinct group, the mystical body of Christ, called into organic union with him." The church as an institution or assembly of believers in the world is not what is being referred to by Chafer here. "There are organized churches in the world with their memberships, but they should not be confused with the one church of which Christ is the Head and all members in

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frankly seems at times as though he is finessing the problem of dualism. Even though he can say that "no material or physical thing is evil in itself," and that "Satan's deceptions affect merely the human element in the *cosmos*," he can also lapse into a simple identification of the evil *kosmos* with the physical world. Satan is not only "the god of the world," but also "the god of this earth." Satan has laid claim to "the earth" (see *Satan*, 54, 76, 146). In his book *Grace* Chafer writes: "The Christian is not of this world. He has been translated into the kingdom of Christ. He is a citizen of heaven, and his only relation to this world is that of an ambassador and witness. He is in the enemy's land; for Satan is the 'god of this world';" *Grace*, 324–25. The antithesis here is not a moral one that transpires within the world, that is, a tension between God's intended norms for human life and culture as it is actually produced under the misdirection of sinful humanity, but is rather one of metaphysic, one of heaven and earth. Satan is here seen as monarch over more than simply misdirected human culture.

<sup>8</sup>Chafer, *ST*, 4.109. Cf. 4.89; *Satan and the Satanic System*, 139; *Major Bible Themes*, 85.



particular.”<sup>9</sup> Chafer claimed that Paul did not think of the church as an “organization,” but rather as an “organism.” When Paul used the word ἐκκλησία he was not thinking of people organized into an historical congregation but “the whole company of the redeemed who have been saved in the present age.”<sup>10</sup> Thus the true church is a mystical body. The *corpus Christi mysticum* is equally as otherworldly as its individual members. Chafer claimed that “the Church is foreign to the earth and related to it only as a witnessing people. They are strangers and pilgrims, ambassadors whose citizenship is in heaven.”<sup>11</sup>

What we see in the dispensationalism of Scofield and Chafer is a fully spiritualized notion of the church as the body of Christ. The “true” church is conceived of strictly as a mystical organism. It is not to be thought of as an organization or institution within our world. In fact, the Bible knows almost nothing of the church as a this-worldly reality, according to Chafer.<sup>12</sup> As an organized reality within our world, the church is not bound under the headship of Christ, and thus lacks any organic unity because it is held together by nothing more theologically significant than “articles of agreement on certain religious topics.” “In its simplest conception,” Chafer wrote, “the local church is *no more than* the assembly of *professed* believers in one locality” (emphasis mine).<sup>13</sup> At root, then, Chafer thought of the ἐκκλησία as a transcendent entity. It is the “invisible” church.

### *Darbyist Background of Classical Dispensationalist Ecclesiology*

The view of the church as the heaven-born body of Christ as put forward by Scofield and Chafer was amazingly consistent with the ecclesiology of dispensationalism’s first theologian, John Nelson Darby. In the 1820’s Darby was a deacon in the Church of England, but he grew increasingly disillusioned with the church as he witnessed the crown’s political manipulation of the church and the church’s own spiritual laxness.<sup>14</sup> By 1828 when he published his first tract on ecclesiology he had already begun to think of the true church as qualitatively different from the Church of England. Darby later wrote in his *Letters*:

I came to understand that I was united to Christ in heaven, and that, consequently, my place before God was represented by His own. . . . It

<sup>9</sup>Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 204–5.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 207.

<sup>11</sup>Chafer, *ST*, 2.213. Cf. *Satan and the Satanic System*, 143.

<sup>12</sup>Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 205. Cf. John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959) 81.

<sup>13</sup>Chafer, *ST*, 4.146. Cf. 144.

<sup>14</sup>Bass, 48–51.



then became clear to me that the Church of God, as he considers it, was composed only by those who are so united to Christ, whereas Christendom, as seen externally, was really the world, and could not be considered as 'the church'.<sup>15</sup>

Speaking of the church as an institution in this world, Darby proclaimed that "the Church is in ruins" and "without remedy."<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that Darby's first and most basic dissent from the Established Church was not on the question of eschatology, but concerned the doctrine of the church. His opposition to the institutional church acted as the catalytic agent for the rest of his theology.

Darby claimed that "the church is properly heavenly," and thus forms "no part of the course of events of this earth."<sup>17</sup> We cannot speak of any theological connection between the believer and the church as a congregation in this world. No mere body of professors can claim identity to Christ because it is predicted in scripture that the church will become no better than heathenism and will be judged by Christ. There is no organic connection between Christ and the church as a society of believers within the world.

Earl Radmacher admits that Darby's proclamation of the ruin of the institutional church led to an expression of the transcendent invisible church that worked to the minimalization of the church "as a physical assembly characterized by a distinctly Christian unity"<sup>18</sup> in subsequent dispensational reflection on ecclesiology. Radmacher offers an important qualification here and it is one that we ought not to ignore. While the theological children of Darby followed him in his ecclesiology, they were still churchmen. While their emphasis upon the invisible church "tended to cause some to neglect the local church," they were nevertheless committed participants in the ministries of the church.<sup>19</sup> Radmacher is correct. Dispensationalists have always been very active in such activities as church planting ministries and the erection of educational institutions to train leaders and workers for the church. Accepting and appreciating Radmacher's qualification we must nevertheless seriously consider the effect of the ecclesiologies of Darby, Scofield and Chafer. Their emphasis upon an otherworldly, mystical body lost sight of the concrete, visible church.

<sup>15</sup>J. N. Darby, *Letters of J. N. Darby*, 3 vols. (London: Stow Bible and Tract Depot, n.d.) 3.298.

<sup>16</sup>Quoted in Bass, 100.

<sup>17</sup>Quoted in Douglas W. Frank, *Less Than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 94.

<sup>18</sup>Earl D. Radmacher, *What the Church is all About* (Chicago: Moody, 1972) 139.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 22-23.

*The Church as Visible Community*

If we accept the thesis that the real distinction between the church and Israel is historical rather than metaphysical, one of *then* versus *now* rather than heavenly versus earthly, we have opened the door to a return to the church as a concrete community as the starting point for ecclesiology. The New Testament does not attempt to remove the church from historical existence. It is not seen as some ethereal reality that lives its life far removed from time and space. Quite the contrary, the church is the one great, tangible, observable truth of the Christian religion. Of course, we may still say that the church in its fullness surpasses visible reality, that there is a great multitude of saints from every nation and every age from Pentecost until now who make up the church.<sup>20</sup> But it is still the case that this is not what the New Testament commonly means by the word ἐκκλησία. The vast majority of occurrences of the word refer to concrete local gatherings of Christians.<sup>21</sup> Paul wrote his letters to specific local gatherings: "to the church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1), "to the churches of Galatia" (Gal 1:2), "to the church of the Thessalonians" (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). Likewise Luke in the book of Acts makes frequent reference to the church as concrete community (Acts 5:11; 8:1; 11:22; 12:1,5). Several New Testament texts speak of the church without reference to locality or appear to speak of the church (singular) as a collective term for all assemblies (e.g. Acts 9:31; 1 Cor 12:28; 10:32). These inclusive references do not serve in the least to separate the church from this-worldly realities. Certainly, Paul was able to speak of the church as an extended reality to which all who are ἐν Χριστῷ belong (Matt 16:18; 1 Pet 2:19; Eph 1:22–23), but that "invisible" church appears to be an extension of, or theological extrapolation upon his primary understanding of the ἐκκλησία as an observable community.<sup>22</sup> Paul thought of these congregations not as societies of people united by mere profession, but the very church of God (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:2). The church belongs to the one who has brought it into existence. Paul did not think of the "visible" church as a religious club or a group of mere professors, but a divinely created entity.

<sup>20</sup>See P. T. O'Brien, "The Church as a Heavenly and Eschatological Entity," in *The Church in the Bible and the World*, ed. by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 88–119.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 318. Radmacher claims: "An examination of the New Testament reveals that out of one hundred and fourteen occurrences, *ekklesia* refers to the local church at least ninety times." Cf. Robert Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody, 1972) 16.

<sup>22</sup>Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Historical Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 44–47; Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon: Word Biblical Commentary* 44 (Waco, Texas: Word, 1982) 58–61.

The Reformed theologian, John Murray questioned the idea of the church as a society of mere professors. He rightly noted that the definition of the visible, "particular" church as a body of professors has arisen from the observed reality of the presence of unregenerate people within the church. Defining the church merely as the sphere of profession allows us to make sense of the discrepancy between the church as it realistically exists and our idealizations of it. Under this view the *ekklēsia* is nothing more than a quality of relationship possessed by a portion of the individuals within the membership of the local assembly. Murray's own understanding of the church could not be more dissimilar. While he did not reject the idea of the "invisible" church, he clearly articulated a view that sees the church primarily as the concrete congregation:

The church may not be defined as an entity wholly invisible to human perception and observation. What needs to be observed is that, whether the church is viewed as the broader communion of the saints or as the unit of assembly of believers in a home or town or city, it is always a visible observable entity.<sup>23</sup>

Murray's solution to the problem of the relationship of unbelieving "professors" to the church is interesting. When Paul addressed the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians he spoke to them as "those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy" (1 Cor 1:2). As the letter shows, Paul did not view the church at Corinth idealistically in any sense. On the contrary, he saw them realistically and addressed the problems at Corinth head-on. When he spoke to the church he defined it in such terms that it would not allow for the inclusion of those who are not sanctified and called to be holy. The unregenerate within the assembly are not church.<sup>24</sup> We must not confuse the existential appearance of the church created by the hypocrisy of the unregenerate camp-follower with the New Testament description of the church as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (1 Pet 2:9). To do so is to allow the presence of the unbeliever to dictate the very definition of the church.

Please do not misunderstand me. By speaking of the church as a this-worldly reality I do not mean to refer to the church as an institution. Like any group of people, the church naturally seeks institutions to organize and administer its life and ministry. Yet, it is still the case that the church is not a hierarchy, a polity, or a

<sup>23</sup>John Murray, "The Nature and Unity of the Church," in *Collected Writings of John Murray, 2: Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977) 326. Cf. 323.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 327.

denomination anymore than it is a building fitted with a steeple and pews. The church is the community of God's people. It is as the people of God that the church is the concrete manifestation of God's sovereign rule. When the world looks at the church and actually sees the church, it does not see buildings, denominations, parachurch organizations or seminaries. What it sees is the people of God gathered together in community. That community is the sole embodiment of the divine presence and rule within our world.

### *The Body of Christ*

Dispensational theologians have often spoken of the Pauline image of the body of Christ as expressing an essential relationship between the church and Christ, who is its head.<sup>25</sup> But is there not more to the image than merely internal relation? Certainly, Paul's use of "body" as referring to the church is metaphorical and we ought to be careful how literally we take the term, but it does not go beyond the image as metaphor to locate its meaning in bodily function as well as internal relation. As such, the image speaks of the church as the locus of Christ's present activity in the world. As the body of Christ, the church is the representative of Christ in the world, a kind of continuation of his own presence and ministry.<sup>26</sup> Ray Stedman writes that, "the holy mystery of the church . . . is the dwelling place of God. He lives in the people. That is the great calling of the church . . . to make visible the invisible Christ."<sup>27</sup> The church makes the rule of God present in the

<sup>25</sup>E.g. Saucy, 32. Saucy limits the image to the expression of relationship between members of the body and the members to Christ. He claims that the body of Christ does not say anything concerning the activity of the church in relation to the world. The image "looks inward and not outward." His stated reason for this construction is his commitment to an individualistic understanding of the church. He writes: "Christ fills His body, giving it life and direction, not that it might move in the world as a body. The church acts in the world as individuals—individuals, however, who are never apart from the body."

Radmacher, 223–37, makes the same restriction of body to internal relations. His reason for doing so, however, concerns his view that when the image of the body is understood as expressing the church's relation to or ministry in the world it leads to an incarnational ecclesiology, an ecclesiology that looks upon the church as an essential extension of the incarnation and therefore identifies the church and Christ. Radmacher contends that such an ecclesiology inevitably elevates the authority of the church to that of Christ.

<sup>26</sup>E. Schweizer, "sōma," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, abridged one volume edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 1148. Edmund Clowney, "The Biblical Theology of the Church," in *The Church in the Bible and the World*, op. cit., emphasizes that the identification implied between Christ and the church in the metaphor of the "body of Christ" is one of identification rather than incarnation, 52–53. I take this as a suitable correction to Radmacher's problem with the identification idea. See fn. 27.

<sup>27</sup>Ray Stedman, *Body Life* (Glendale: Regal, 1972) 15.

world through its ministry. The concrete community is the place where God tabernacles; it is his dwelling place (Eph 2:22), his house (Heb 3:6), and his holy temple (Eph 2:21). God dwells in the church and the church as a physical reality makes God present in the world.

R. L. Omanson makes the point that, "it is significant that [Paul] speaks of the church as the body of Christ but never as a body of Christians."<sup>28</sup> Members are related to one another in the same way that the physical body knows an interconnectedness of all its parts. As an arm or leg has no life outside the body, there is no such idea as an individual's relationship to the Lord in isolation from the community of faith. Yet classical dispensationalists often spoke as though there were. It is to the problem of individualism that we will now turn.

#### DISPENSATIONALIST INDIVIDUALISM

Enjoying his true identity and position with Christ, "in the heavens," the Christian does not dwell in the world for that is "where Satan's throne is," according to Scofield.<sup>29</sup> Rather, the believer pilgrimages through the world ever careful not to defile his separation from it. Scofield asks: "What in a word, is the relation of the Church to the world? Briefly this: to pass through it a pilgrim body of witnesses."<sup>30</sup> The mission of evangelism is not to be thought of, however, as 'the mission of the church'. Scofield and Chafer were united in the contention that the evangelistic mandate is not directed to the church as a corporate body but solely to individual Christians. Scofield claimed:

The visible church, *as such* is charged with no mission. The Commission to evangelize the world is personal, and not corporate . . . So far as the Scripture goes, the work of evangelization was done by individuals called directly by the Spirit to that work.<sup>31</sup>

Chafer writes in the same vein:

No responsibility or service is imposed on the church *per se*. Service, like the gifts of the Spirit by whom service is wrought, is individual. It

<sup>28</sup>R. L. Omanson, "The Church," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1984) 233.

<sup>29</sup>C. I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford, 1917) (originally published, 1909) 1333. Chafer made statements which imply the same sort of cosmological dualism as that found in Scofield's understanding of the believer's relation to the world. Chafer thought of the Christian as a displaced person, a refugee, who is only "temporarily tenting where an enemy dwells, and where he is the object of that enemy's fiery darts," *Satan and the Satanic System*, 149-50.

<sup>30</sup>C. I. Scofield, *Addresses on Prophecy* (New York: Charles C. Cook, 1914) 25.

<sup>31</sup>Scofield, *Comprehensive Bible Correspondence Course*, 3.341. Cf. Radmacher, 22-23; Saucy, 32.

could not be otherwise. The common phrase, 'the church's task', is, therefore, without Biblical foundation. It is only when the individuals sense their personal responsibility and claim personal divine enablement that Christian work is done.<sup>32</sup>

Chafer thought of the church in the world as a "missionary society," a society whose purpose is the training and equipping of witnesses. Thus, the church when it gathers may be thought of as a lecture hall or a Christian worker's training center. In its pilgrim journey the church consists only of individual Christians who lack any essential structure to unite them and direct their efforts. The individual believer is the sole expression of Christ and his rule in the world.

### *Sources of Dispensationalist Individualism*

Individualism has become all but sacrosanct in American life, both religious and secular. Paul Lehmann describes the prevailing conviction among American Christians: "It has become axiomatic, and on the alleged authority of Jesus himself, to link Christianity with the exaltation of the individual. Jesus' major concern, so the claim runs, was with the individual."<sup>33</sup> The classical dispensationalist restriction of the mission of the church to individualistic witness certainly fits the American ethos. One of the basic distinctions between the dispensation of law and that of grace, as Chafer saw the matter, was that Israel enjoyed a nationalistic or corporate relationship to God while the present dispensation of the Spirit is set aside as a time in which God works with individuals. God does not "call-out" a church *per se*, but individual persons, their sum constituting the body of Christ.<sup>34</sup>

Considering the church in the world to be an adulterous and apostate institution, both Scofield and Chafer located the activity of the Spirit not in the church but in the individual. The Holy Spirit is not a force but a person, and as a person he energizes and deals with persons, not institutions or groups of people. His agency is person-to-person. As the church is conceived of solely as a loose and voluntaristic association of individuals, the body of Christ is identified with the individual. It is in the individual that the Holy Spirit works, not in the church as in classic Protestantism.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Chafer, *ST*, 4.149.

<sup>33</sup>Paul L. Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963) 57.

<sup>34</sup>Chafer, *ST*, 7.134.

<sup>35</sup>Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978; originally published Univ. of Chicago, 1970) 205, writes: "The emphasis was always personal: personal salvation,



It is difficult to trace dispensationalist individualism back to a single root. Perhaps it finds its headwaters in a revivalism that was geared solely toward the individual's personal experience of Christ, or possibly something no more theological than American "rugged individualism" forms its source. It is difficult to arrange ecclesiastical individualism and classical dispensationalism's restriction of the proximate locus of the ἐκκλησία to the individual believer in a tight causal sequence. It would appear on the face of it that the reduction of the church to a strictly otherworldly entity and the depiction of the church in the world to the sphere of profession forms the theological basis for dispensationalist individualism. The exact causal relation between the two may not be totally evident, but it is clear that the two notions are correlates. The problem with the heightened individualism of classical dispensationalism is that it was never required by dispensationalism as a theological system. One could construe it as an implication of their reduction of the church in the world to the sphere of profession, but the most it ever really did within the system was form one more item in the list of distinctives and discontinuities between the dispensation of the law and the dispensation of grace.

### *Redeemed for Community*

It is indeed unfortunate that Chafer thought of the church as a voluntary association of persons united around some religious ideal. The reality is not to be found in the group, under his view, but in the atomized elements of the group, the individual members, and no special importance is to be given to their association. The most that Chafer could say in favor of the individual believer gathering together with others was that it provided him with certain "advantages."<sup>36</sup>

The amazing thing about this exaggerated emphasis upon the individual believer as exhausting the church in the world is that it does not proceed from a deductive reading of scripture. It must rather be read *into* the New Testament material bearing upon the church. Paul did not write his letters to individual believers, except for Timothy and Titus, but to churches, groups of people. He spoke to the church as the body of Christ, of which individuals are the members. Robert Banks' most interesting book, *Paul's Idea of Community*, makes the point that Paul directed his correspondence to actual bodies of believers, real people bound together as the people of

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personal consecration, the person of the Holy Spirit, the personal premillennial return of Christ."

<sup>36</sup>Chafer, *ST*, 4.145.

God, not some individual, idealized pilgrim.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the New Testament use of the pronoun "you" is usually cast in the second person plural, something which is unfortunately lost in most English translations. The Word of God was not written to the individual for use in his private devotional but to the people of God, Israel in the Old Testament, and the church as the body of Christ in the New.

Certainly, dispensationalist individualism is not solely responsible for the attitude of many modern Christians toward church membership, but it is a contributing factor. For many American Christians today, the church, as an actual body of confessing believers, is simply a matter of convenience. Whether or not one associates, and participates, is considered to be largely a personal matter. If someone in the church offends me in some way, if the pastor hits too close to home from the pulpit, if my pet program or agenda is rejected, I simply pull up stakes and move to the next church. As a society we have simply lost all recognition of the local body of believers as an essential of the Christian religion and the Christian life. We understand our relation to the Lord, our redemption and our sanctification, in totally individualist terms. We have Americanized Christianity more than we have Christianized America.

Contra Chafer, we must affirm that God addresses us in community. We may be redeemed separately, but we are redeemed for community. Once redeemed we are no longer separate 'monads', but part of the people of God. The individual does not disappear into the corporate mass within Christianity. It is not a question of either individualism or corporateness. The individual person matters within the body of Christ not because he stands alone, isolated from all others, but rather because he stands alongside the other members of the church. Robert Webber rightly retains the genius of the evangelical tradition of personal faith while emphasizing the interconnectedness of the members of the body when he writes:

True, the Christian faith is intensely personal. 'Christ died for me' is an article of faith. Individualism, however, is something different from a personal relationship with God in Christ. Rather, it is a form of Christianity that fails to understand the integral relationship that exists between the members of Christ's body.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup>Banks, 35ff. G. C. Berkouwer writes: "Paul's view of the Church is by nature strongly anti-individualistic. The Church does not consist of independent 'monads'; rather, she is a fellowship in which isolation is replaced by 'sympathy': if one member suffers, all suffer; and if one member is honored, all rejoice together;" G. C. Berkouwer, *The Church*, trans. by James E. Davison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 81.

<sup>38</sup>Robert Webber, *The Majestic Tapestry: How the Power of the Early Christian Tradition can Enrich Contemporary Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986) 51. G. C. Berkouwer, 77 writes similarly: "The individual does not disappear behind the vague

The gospel is not entrusted to individuals but to the church. We can no longer separate the church from the evangelistic mandate or God's soteriological purpose for our world. Rather, we must affirm the church as the divinely appointed context of salvation. The faith has been entrusted to the saints, the church of God. The church's task is to call people to redemption and the fellowship of the saints. As Howard Snyder writes:

The gospel call is a call to *something*, and that something is more than a doctrine of an experience or a heavenly juridical transaction or the exercise of faith or even, exclusively, Jesus Christ. The gospel intends to call persons *to the body of Christ*, that is, the community of believers with Jesus Christ as its essential and sovereign head.<sup>39</sup>

### *The Church and Sanctification*

Undoubtedly, part of the problem of individualism within dispensationalist theology is to be found in the Keswick doctrine of Christian holiness.<sup>40</sup> The church played virtually no role in the Keswick doctrine, in which the pursuit after holiness was understood as a purely personal sojourn. Thus Chafer was able to limit sanctification solely to individual responsibility.<sup>41</sup> The emphasis of Keswick was always personal. The 'secret' of Christian holiness was understood as exhaustively residing in the activities of the Holy Spirit within the individual believer. Can we so easily divorce holiness from our life in the church? We need the church to be holy. Being a Christian is not something a person does in isolation from others. Sanctification, like justification takes place in and through the church by the working of the Holy Spirit. We are "being *built together* to become a dwelling in which

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contours of a 'totality', but he is liberated from individualization and solitariness in order to have a place in this new fellowship. That the Lord cares for the sheep includes, not excludes specific attention for one lost sheep (Luke 15:4ff). Every individual need receives His undivided attention; yet at the same time, ways are opened by which the individual receives a place in human fellowship, ending all individualism."

<sup>39</sup>Howard A. Snyder, *The Community of the King* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1977) 13.

<sup>40</sup>See Douglas W. Frank, *Less Than Conquerors: How Evangelicals Entered the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 113–16. Frank's analysis is openly polemical in character and hostile to dispensational theology and the Keswick doctrine of holiness. However, his point that Keswick sought a perfection of individual dispositions is well taken. A less volatile but no less critical discussion of Keswick can be found in J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Old Tappen: Revell, 1984) 145–63.

<sup>41</sup>Chafer, *ST*, 4:13: "To this heavenly people, who are the New Creation of God . . . is committed, not in any corporate sense but only as individuals, a two-fold responsibility, namely (a) to adorn by a Christlike life the doctrine which they represent by the very nature of their salvation, and (b) to be His witnesses to the utmost parts of the earth."

God lives by his Spirit" (Eph 2:22). Christ gave himself *for the church* "to make her holy" (Eph 5:25).

Calvin rightly commented that, "he errs who desires to grow by himself. . . . Just so, if we wish to belong to Christ, let no man be anything for himself: but let all be whatever we are for each other."<sup>42</sup> The New Testament doctrine of the priesthood of the believer is not only about having one's own access to God without the intermediary of a human priest but also the right to act as a priest on behalf of the other members of the body of Christ (Heb 13:15–16). Our own personal holiness is never totally separate from the corporate holiness of the church. The church, which is the temple of God, grows as a structure, composed of living stones. Individual members minister for the growth of the whole body (Eph 4:11–16). It is not too much to say that our personal relationship to Christ cannot be separated from our relationship to the church. Keswick's reduction of Christian holiness to the management of psychological dispositions and the cultivation of personal spiritual experience tended toward an unhealthy anthropocentrism that could often look like outright egocentrism. When holiness is delimited by one's personal relation to Christ, there exists the threat of a narcissism in which the Lord becomes little more than a device for the realization of the believer's own ends.

### *The Classical Dispensationalist Reduction of the Church*

When the church is thought of in primarily institutional terms, the marriage between culture and church becomes so close that the latter loses its own character and for all intents becomes invisible. When it is conceived in mystical, otherworldly categories, it is effectively removed from all cultural life and relevance, and thus becomes truly "invisible." In its partitioning of Israel and the church into different metaphysical realms, classical dispensationalism cut the believer and the church off from the earthliness and the earthiness of the Old Testament. Dispensationalism's understanding of the church's essentially otherworldly nature restricted the Christian revelational horizon to the internal and the personal. Through their effort to separate themselves from the world-system and their restriction of Christianity to a gospel of individualistic spiritual rescue, classical dispensationalists in effect allowed the powers of secularization to control and direct the greater part of the believer's life. We are left with a religion that could in reality be practiced on the side since it did not impact or inform the believer's social existence in any way. Ordinary business, political, and educational life could be carried out as if the gospel did not even exist.

<sup>42</sup>John Calvin, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians*, C. R. LXXIX, 203. Quoted in Lehmann, 66.

It is indeed unfortunate that Scofield and Chafer read the New Testament's critique of worldliness as a recommendation of other-worldliness. The world outside of the parameters of the salvation of the individual soul was abandoned to secularism. The dispensationalist theology of Scofield and Chafer subverted its own intentions and assisted the very forces from which it had sworn to protect the faith. The process of secularization has forced much of Christian theology to limit its recognition of biblical authority to areas that are largely irrelevant to the direction of culture and society as whole. C. I. Scofield and Lewis Sperry Chafer unwittingly participated in that process in their reduction of the Christian revelational horizon to a personalist soteriology and an otherworldly ecclesiology.

The dispensationalist theology of Scofield and Chafer is a good example of the contextualization of evangelical theology during an age when that theology was under intense attack from its theological rivals, and when the rise of historical consciousness threatened to eclipse all objectivist or ontologist understandings of the Christian faith. Attempting to offer a vital critique of culture in the context of trying to articulate the ways of God in history is an enterprise that is certainly to be welcomed by the Christian faith; and Scofield and Chafer both did that in a timely fashion. Their endeavor to critique liberal theology and modernism in American culture, and offer an alternative vision of the kingdom of God and its demands upon the Christian was to a degree successful. Their commitment to scripture and the defense of orthodoxy tutored a generation of Bible believing Americans. Their attempt to preserve or restore traditional Christian values and ways, however, was a total failure. Classical dispensationalism was not only incapable of halting the process of secularization in American society, but was itself, and largely by its very own hand, a victim of that secularization. Its radical emphasis upon a metaphysical distinction between Israel and the church reduced the gospel to one of individual rescue and the church to a vague, other-worldly entity that is of little consequence to the Christian's existence in the world. Thus the believer's work-a-day existence is surrendered to the very powers of autonomy and secularism that Scofield and Chafer so vehemently denounced.

#### CONCLUSION

Darby said that the church is in ruins. It is time to re-enter the ruin and take stock. Yes, there is sin in the church; and yes, there are even unregenerate people in the church. But is it a ruin, something that must be abandoned in favor of some other form of dwelling in some other locale? Paul did not appear to think so. He could call a congregation that was terribly divided the "saints," a congregation that was polluted by sin "the church of God." The church is not yet

what it will be in the *eschaton*, but there is no biblical ground upon which one can stand and abandon the church.

Dispensational theology seeks to understand the ways of God in our world in an historical framework. That is its genius. Dispensationalism understands that the Bible is about God's work in our historical existence. That is its great contribution to evangelical theology. In light of the rising ability of dispensational theology to be self-critical, I suggest that it is time for dispensationalism to give the same attention to the church as the people of God within the world and within history that it has given to Israel.



## PLUNDERING THE LION'S DEN—A PORTRAIT OF DIVINE FURY (NAHUM 2:3–11)

J. DARYL CHARLES

*Two books of the Bible end with a question. Both are found in the prophetic corpus of the OT and both are addressing Nineveh. One, however, depicts the reluctance of a prophet fleeing the presence of the Lord—the book of Jonah; the other, written a century later, reflects the burden of the prophet Nahum the Elkoshite, who decrees the vengeance and fury of the Lord. In the one book, Nineveh repents. In the other, Nineveh is ravaged. In light of the generally accepted view that Nahum's prophecy dates between 650 and 612 B.C. (the fall of Nineveh), the northern kingdom of Israel had long since fallen. At approximately 700 B.C., Esarhaddon had secured his reign in Assyria. Civil war however began to weaken the northern power some fifty years later, precipitating a slow deterioration. After 634 B.C., one may speak of the Assyrian demise, during which time the Babylonian revolt, lasting roughly fourteen years, climaxes in the year 612. It is the league of Babylonians and Medes which ultimately destroys Nineveh. Nah 1:12 suggests that the city is not yet visibly crumbling ("Though they are yet whole and numerous . . .").*

*Nineveh, that imperial seat of the Assyrian Empire and cultic seat of Ištar, patron-goddess of war, had been used as Yahweh's vessel to judge Israel. The tables were now being turned. Nineveh herself was to become the besieged. In this vision-oracle of Nahum, the audience is given a prophetic and exceedingly descriptive account of the assault and sack of the Assyrian stronghold. Structurally, the sack of Nineveh as depicted in the vision-report consists of three components: the siege (2:1–5), vain resistance with capture and flight (2:6–10), and the prophet's exultation over the destruction (2:11–13).*

*Both Jonah and Nahum are a commentary on the character of Yahweh. Interestingly, both draw as a reference point from Exod 34:6–7, an allusion to Yahweh's compassion and slowness to anger. Jonah ultimately learns of Yahweh's mercy. It is Nahum who stresses Yahweh's justice.*

According to the command of Aššur and Ištar, I did march . . .

(from the Aššurbanipal Annals)<sup>1</sup>

The immense armies of Aššur I mustered, and went out to conquer those cities. With powerful battering-rams I smashed their fortified walls and reduced them to the ground. The people together with their possessions I took as booty. Those cities . . . I devastated, destroyed, burned with fire.

(from the Sargon Annals)<sup>2</sup>

In the might and strength of the great gods, my lords, I marched victoriously in Elam through his whole breadth. Turning back, with my hands full due to my might, I returned to Assyria . . . cities I conquered, destroyed, laid waste and burned with fire. Their gods, their inhabitants, their cattle and herds, their possessions, their goods, wagons, horses, chariots, spears and other war-materials I led back to Assyria.

(from the Aššurbanipal Annals)<sup>3</sup>

I felled with the sword 800 of their combat troops, I burned 3000 captives from them. I did not leave one of them alive as hostage. I captured alive . . . their city ruler. I made a pile of their corpses. I burnt their adolescent boys and girls. I flayed . . . their city ruler and draped his skin over the wall of the city.

(from an inscription of Tiglath-Pileser I)<sup>4</sup>

#### ASSYRIA, NINEVEH AND THE PROPHETIC BURDEN

In the Genesis 10 table of nations, a brief and somewhat more personal narrative is found in the midst of an otherwise "dry" genealogy delineating the offspring of Noah's sons following the flood. Of interest are three particular items: (1) mention of Nimrod as "a mighty hunter" (twice in v 9), (2) allusion to Nineveh (twice in vv 11–12), and (3) the statement that out of that land "he went forth to Aššur" (v 11). Certainly characteristic of his progeny to come, Nimrod<sup>5</sup> exercised rule from Uruk in the south to Akkad in the north, stretching eastward with the Tigris bordering on the west.<sup>6</sup> Following

<sup>1</sup>S. A. Smith, ed., *Die Keilschrifttexte Asurbanipals, Königs von Assyrien (668–626 vor Christus)* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1887), 1.47 (col. 5), 61 (col. 8), 69 (col. 9), 75 (col. 10).

<sup>2</sup>A. G. Lie, ed., *The Inscriptions of Sargon II King of Assyria—Part I: The Annals* (Paris: Lib. Orient. P. Geuthner, 1929) 9.

<sup>3</sup>Smith, *Keilschrifttexte*, 41–42 (col. 5).

<sup>4</sup>A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* (2 vols.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975) 2.547.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Mic 5:5, where the prophet employs this older designation for "Assyria" in a context of Assyrian *military* advance, the imminent siege of Jerusalem, and contrasting eschatological promise (5:1–5).

<sup>6</sup>P. E. Botta, *The Buried City of the East: Nineveh* (London: Off. of the Nat. Ill. Lib., 1851) 27.

the establishment of his rule, there is no mention in the OT of his kingdom for another 1500 years.

The first allusion to Nineveh in a cuneiform text comes from the twenty-first century B.C.,<sup>7</sup> from whence is found the etching of a fish in the middle of a city drawn in the form of an ideogram. The fish emblem was that of the goddess Nina.<sup>8</sup> From the time of the kings of Akkad (2500–2300 B.C.), however, Nineveh was consecrated primarily to Ištar, goddess of love and war, to whom the oldest temple in Nineveh, the war-temple, was dedicated. It is significant that we find in Nahum 3 the blending of both “harlot” (vv 4–6)<sup>9</sup> and “war” (vv 1–3) imagery.

Many of the reliefs found in the royal palace of Nineveh make boast of the pride of Assyria: hunting and warfare.<sup>10</sup> It was customary for the king to take part in lion-hunts,<sup>11</sup> since such provided the best training for the battlefield.<sup>12</sup> Because the Assyrians never lacked for warfare,<sup>13</sup> it is thus fitting that the imagery of roaring, devouring lions—used to depict Yahweh in chap. 1 and to taunt the Assyrians in chap. 2—is exploited in the Nahum prophecy. Here one encounters vivid representation of the Assyrian war-machine. Isaiah, a contemporary to Sargon II, described the advance of the Assyrian juggernaut:

Their roaring is like that of a lion,  
They roar like young lions;  
They growl upon seizing their prey  
And carry it off where none can rescue.  
(Isa 5:29)

Throughout the book of Nahum “Assyrian propaganda”<sup>14</sup> is being utilized, much of which is found in Isaianic traditions one hundred years earlier. But whereas Isaiah portrayed the awesomeness

<sup>7</sup>A. Parrot, *Nineveh and the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1955) 24.

<sup>8</sup>Note the connection between another prophet addressing Nineveh and a fish: Jonah.

<sup>9</sup>References will follow the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>10</sup>A bounty of information is available due to Assyrian reliefs, most of which graphically depict facets of Assyrian warfare. Particularly useful is Y. Yadin's *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands* (2 vols.; New York-Toronto-London: McGraw-Hill, 1963), esp. 2.291–314 with corresponding illustrations.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. M. Wolff and D. Opitz, “Jagdpferde in der altorientalischen und klassischen Kunst,” *AfO* 10 (1936) 317–58, esp. 328–30. In Nineveh's imperial palace, two winged lion sculptures and eight reliefs were found which showed the king chasing a wild bull and a lion (see Botta, *Nineveh*, p. 120).

<sup>12</sup>Parrot, *Nineveh*, 72.

<sup>13</sup>A. Parrot (*Nineveh*, p. 72) described peace to the Assyrians as that “unstable armistice” which was made to be broken. It was of little use.

<sup>14</sup>So P. Machinist, “Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah,” *JAOS* 103 (1983) 736.

of Assyria in the height of its military ventures, Nahum announces that the northern power is to be felled, and this by the Lord of Hosts Himself: "'I am against you,' says the Lord of Hosts" (2:14 and 3:5). Using theophany at the outset of his prophetic outcry, Nahum is not disposed to depict a mere random demonstration of Yahweh's might. Rather, the "burden" (מִשָּׁא) <sup>15</sup> which he is carrying (1:1) is focused on revealing the *divine purpose*:<sup>16</sup> the anger and fury of the Lord of Hosts is directed toward *judgment*. For,

The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?" <sup>17</sup>

Who can withstand His indignation?

Who can endure His fierce anger?

His fury is poured out like fire,

The rocks are shattered before Him. <sup>18</sup>

Following the opening hymn of theophany, <sup>19</sup> the divine purpose unfolds: the yoke of the Assyrian oppressor is to be broken (1:13). The unit 2:3-11 serves graphically and dramatically to give reassurance that the affliction spoken of in 1:12 would cease and good news (1:15) would be published. The prophet in essence is declaring: "Now this is how catastrophe will strike Assyria . . ."

#### POETIC AND GENRE ANALYSIS OF 2:3-11

Nah 2:3-11 has been classified in literary type as a "vision-oracle" or "vision-report." <sup>20</sup> M. Sister, <sup>21</sup> F. Horst, <sup>22</sup> and B. O. Long <sup>23</sup> all build on Hermann Gunkel's distinction made earlier this century between הֲוִיָּוִן ("vision") and דְּבָר ("word" or "hearing"). That is, the prophet is not merely a messenger of Yahweh (and hence, the דְּבָר). He also reports what he has seen (הֲוִיָּוִן). The nature of the content found in the vision-report could encompass a threat, a promise, a

<sup>15</sup>The term is derived from נָשָׂא, "lift up" or "bear," hence a "load" (H. S. Gehman, "The 'Burden' of the Prophets," *JQR* 31 [1940] 109).

<sup>16</sup>H. Schulz, *Das Buch Nahum* (BZAW 129; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973) 74-75.

<sup>17</sup>Amos 3:8; cf. 1:2.

<sup>18</sup>Nah 1:6.

<sup>19</sup>For further discussion of the theophanic hymn, see Schulz, *Nahum*, pp. 74-75. See also J. Jeremias, *Theophanie. Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1965).

<sup>20</sup>So M. Sister, "Die Typen der prophetischen Visionen in der Bibel," *MGWJ* 78 (1934) 399-430. Others following suit are A. S. van der Woude (*Jona, Nahum* [Amsterdam: Nijkerk, 1978] 97), R. F. Ungern-Sternberg and H. Lamparter (*Der Tag des Gerichtes Gottes* [Stuttgart: Calwer, 1975] 216-17), and W. Rudolph (*Micha-Nahum-Habakkuk-Zephania* [Gutersloh: Mohn, 1975] 170).

<sup>21</sup>"Typen," 399-430.

<sup>22</sup>"Die Visionsschilderungen der Propheten," *EvTh* 20 (1960) 193-205.

<sup>23</sup>"Reports of Visions among the Prophets," *JBL* 95 (1976) 353-65.

rebuke, a word of consolation, a judgment-speech, or a call to listen. Horst describes the vision-report as the announcement of the intrinsic out-working of Yahweh's purpose as perceived by the prophet,<sup>24</sup> whereby image and word are closely linked.<sup>25</sup> Such a definition would indeed fit Nahum's oracle.

The language and style of the vision are living and dramatic, full of intensity and force. Scene upon scene storms upon the reader's mind, with an acceleration throughout the book reaching a near-fever pitch. In effect, the audience finds itself amidst the destruction and ruin, feeling the full impact with the inner eye. Apocalyptic in character, the vision-report depicts Yahweh's hand behind all. The audience is enveloped in the sobering awareness of divine *retribution*.

The prophet is a genuine literary artist. Included in the variety of his literary modes are a hymn (1:2-9), a threat (1:10-14 and 3:8-17), a salvation-oracle (1:12-2:3), a vision-report (2:4-10), a taunt (2:11 and 3:7-10), a woe-oracle (3:1-3) and a rhetorical accusation (3:19). Specifically in 2:3-11, he utilizes four particular devices: sound-play, irony, repetition and striking imagery. The latter is perhaps most evident, engulfing the whole of the vision-report and playing upon several of Nineveh's cherished symbols: war-materials (vv 4-5), water deluge (vv 7-8), the palace (v 7), the temple cult of Ištar (v 8), military plunder and the taking of spoils (v 10), and helpless reaction to siege and fall (v 11). In examining the vision-report, one cannot help but be struck by the abundance of parallel or contrasting images:

- 2:3 Jacob // Israel  
"restoring" vs. "wasting" and "ruining"
- 2:4 "shield" // "chariots" // "spears"  
"reddening" // "making scarlet"  
"covering" // "array"
- 2:5 "raging" // "reverberating"  
"torches" // "lightning"
- 2:6 nobles of the past vs. stumbling of the present  
"stumbling" vs. "dashing"
- 2:7 "sluice-gates" opening // palace dissolving

<sup>24</sup>While the task of the prophet was to "*forth-tell*" the דְּבַר יְהוָה, it is erroneous to extract the prophetic-predictive element from the context of his utterances, as is so often the case among modern readers. Indeed Nahum is affirming the sovereignty of Yahweh and triumph in history, yet it is significantly *before* (note the προ—in προφήτης), not *after*, the event (contra A. S. van der Woude, "The Book of Nahum: A Letter Written in Exile," *OTS* [1977] 108-26). Furthermore, Judah is *still* afflicted (1:12-13) and feasts are *not yet* being celebrated (2:1).

<sup>25</sup>Horst, "Visionsschilderungen," 193-205.

- 2:8 the city's "queen"<sup>26</sup> // "her maidens"  
 moaning // "beating the breasts"  
 2:9 "pool of waters" // "its waters"  
 two cries vs. no one looking  
 2:10 silver // gold  
 silver and gold // "store"  
 "precious things" // "glory" or "wealth"  
 2:11 "pillaged" // "plundered" // "stripped"  
 "melting heart" // "buckling knees"  
 "trembling bodies" // "paling faces"

## 2:3-11 AS A UNIT

The vision-report contained in 2:3-11 follows an oracle to Judah in which comfort (1:12) and a loosening of the Assyrian yoke (1:13) are promised. The prophet's message is emphatic: "Now I will break . . ." Though Judah is at the time of the utterance still afflicted (1:12), the tables are about to be turned. Yahweh will restore Israel, that is, "Israel" of the monarchy (note the use of "Jacob" and "Israel" in 2:2), to its prestige (2:3a). How is it, then, that the tables will be turned? The prophet offers a vivid preview in the climactic vision-report of 2:3-11.

Following the dramatic fall of Nineveh is a taunt of the Assyrian "lion" in 2:12-13. How is it, voices the prophet, that the "plunderer" has become the "plundered"? The first of two divine affirmations then ensues: "'I am against you,' says the Lord of Hosts" (2:14).<sup>27</sup> In order to view 2:3-11 in the context of the whole prophecy, we would suggest the following structure for the book as a whole:<sup>28</sup>

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 1:1     | Introduction                                  |
| :2-10   | Hymn of Theophany: the Lord Comes in Judgment |
| :12-2:2 | Oracle of Hope to Judah                       |
| 2:3a    | Transition: the Announcement                  |
| :3b-11  | Vision-Report: the Plunder of Nineveh         |
| :12-13  | Taunt: Where are the Lions?                   |
| :14     | Threat: Promised Destruction                  |
| 3:1-3   | Judgment Speech: Woe to the War-Goddess       |
| :4-6    | Judgment Speech: Woe to the Love-Goddess      |
| :7      | Taunt: Nineveh Laid Waste                     |
| :8-10   | Taunt: Nineveh's Antecedent                   |

<sup>26</sup>One's rendering of 2:8 pending. See pp. 8-9.

<sup>27</sup>Also in 3:5.

<sup>28</sup>For a helpful discussion on the structure of Nahum, see W. Staerk, *Das assyrische Weltreich im Urteil der Propheten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1908) 177-79.



- :11-18 Threat: Nineveh's Sealed Fate  
 :19 Taunt/Accusation: Final Word on Assyria's Cruelty

## COMMENTARY

2:3

As in the closing question of 3:19, 2:3 employs an emphatic clause<sup>29</sup> to introduce the vision-report: "Indeed the Lord is restoring the splendor of Jacob . . ." The Hebrew particle כִּי ("for," "indeed") underscores the divine purpose behind Nineveh's destruction: the restorative work of Yahweh. Verse 3 is emphatic ("even the glory of Israel") and transitional. Since in 1:2-13 it was announced that Yahweh would storm the enemy's citadel, 2:2 serves as a call to watch, to man the ramparts. It is to the *Ninevites* that the commands "climb the ramparts," "keep watch" and "keep guard" are spoken. In Assyrian reliefs, the ramparts are *always* manned.<sup>30</sup> However, in 2:1, the roles are reversed. The inhabitants of Nineveh are the ones being besieged. It is *they* who will need to deal with the assault. The reversal is demonstrated in 2:3b. Those normally "devastating" (קָצַץ), the Assyrians, are now on the receiving end: "the devastators are being devastated."<sup>31</sup>

Verse 3 shows that Yahweh works within history.<sup>32</sup> His work is one of "restoring" (שׁוּב), as in Ps 126:1: "When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream" (RSV). In Nahum, Yahweh is restoring Jacob's/Israel's former "prestige" or "pride" (גָּאון). In Isa 14:11, גָּאון is the "pomp" of the king of Babylon which is to be cast down. In Isa 23:9, it is the "pride" of Tyre which the Lord of Hosts would stain. Similarly, in Jer 13:9, Yahweh declares that He would mar the "pride" of Judah and Jerusalem. And in Amos 6:8, it is the "pride" of Jacob which the Lord abhors. Here, however, the גָּאון is being restored, insofar as the Assyrian yoke is to be loosened.

<sup>29</sup>Of the six כִּי-clauses in Nahum (1:10, 1:13, 2:1; twice in 2:3, 3:19), three function to give accent: 1:13, 2:3 and 3:19. Cf. K. Cathcart, "More Philological Studies in Nahum," *JNWSL* 7 (1979) 6.

<sup>30</sup>Parrot, *Nineveh*, 82.

<sup>31</sup>See J. Halévy, "Le Livre de Nahum," *RevSem* 13 (1905) 107.

<sup>32</sup>C. A. Keller, "Die theologische Bewältigung der geschichtlichen Wirklichkeit in der Prophetie Nahums," *VT* 22 (1972) 411, is of the opinion that Nahum alludes to few—if any—specific facts regarding history. Contrarily, we would argue that Nahum is *quite* accurate in depicting specifics of Nineveh's ruin. Keller seems to blithely disregard what has been commonly known regarding Nineveh's destruction. See, for example, A. Parrot (cf. n. 7) and P. E. Botta (cf. n. 6). Also, A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains* (2 vols.; New York: Putnam, 1849), and C. J. Gadd, "The Fall of Nineveh," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 1921-1923 (London: Oxford U., 1923) 475-76. In truth, the accuracy of the prophet is astounding.

The tone of 2:3 is not so much "restorative" in an *exilic* sense,<sup>33</sup> as it is firstly in an imminent sense (release from dreaded Assyrian domination in the late seventh century B.C.). And yet, the restoration of "Jacob, even Israel" hints at a further level of "reorganization," one which will be reminiscent of the former monarchy. Cathcart<sup>34</sup> correctly notes that the phrase "like the splendor of Israel" is not superfluous;<sup>35</sup> rather, it reinforces the ideal notion of Israel. Interestingly, the metaphor of "wasted vines" present in v 3 also appears in Hos 10:1, in which context Israel had been tried and found lacking.

## 2:4

With almost apocalyptic fervor, Nahum describes the array of war-materials "in the day of preparation." The shields of the warriors are "made red" (אָדָם) and the valiant men are "in scarlet" (תָּלַעַ).<sup>36</sup> The imagery derived from the red color is fantastic and fear-evoking.<sup>37</sup> Some would corroborate Ezek 23:6 and 14 (reference to the Assyrian violet) with the notion that red was the color of the Babylonian and Median armies,<sup>38</sup> and thus, Nahum is seeing their approach.<sup>39</sup> As to the "reddened shields," several explanations have been advanced: (1) a dying or treating of the leather, as in 2 Sam 1:21 and Isa 21:5,<sup>40</sup> (2) the reflection of the sun against copper, as in 1 Macc 6:39,<sup>41</sup> (3) the color of victorious might,<sup>42</sup> and (4) blood dripping.<sup>43</sup> Since the context still entails "preparation," (פְּרִיּוֹם הַכִּינָה), the latter explanation would be insufficient. However, to be conclusive on the "reddening" is

<sup>33</sup>Contra van der Woude, "Letter," 108-26.

<sup>34</sup>"More Studies," 6.

<sup>35</sup>Contra van der Woude ("Letter," 118) who dates Nahum during the exile.

<sup>36</sup>Interestingly, both אָדָם and תָּלַעַ appear together in Isa 1:18 where they relate to Israel's sins.

<sup>37</sup>Consider the red appearance of the apocalyptic horseman in Rev 6:4 and the dragon of red in Rev 12:3.

<sup>38</sup>Gadd ("Fall," 475) notes that a combined assault of Babylonians, Medes and Scythians resulted in Nineveh's sack in 612, though supposedly scattered attacks on the city had been made for three years prior.

<sup>39</sup>See for example, P. Billerbeck and A. Jeremias, "Der Untergang Ninevehs und die Weissagung des Nahum von Elkosch," *BA* 3 (1898) 97, and E. Sellin, *Das Zwölfprophetenbuch* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Deichert, 1930), 2.367.

<sup>40</sup>J. H. Eaton, *Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (London: SCM, 1961) 65, and earlier, B. Duhm, "Anmerkungen zu den zwölf Propheten," *ZAW* 31 (1911) 103.

<sup>41</sup>A. B. Davidson and C. O. Lanchester, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1920) 26.

<sup>42</sup>von Ungern-Sternberg, *Der Tag*, 228.

<sup>43</sup>J. M. P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel* (Edinburgh: Clark, rep. 1974) 312.

impossible. The מָגֵן was a smaller shield, probably made of leather and coated with grease.<sup>44</sup>

Many interesting explanations for the בָּאֵשׁ-פָּלָדוֹת have been offered in the history of the text. A. Haldar considered this *hapax legomenon* to be enigmatic ("perhaps an epithet for fire").<sup>45</sup> Some consider it to have been a metal instrument of some type.<sup>46</sup> A. Billerbeck and A. Jeremias,<sup>47</sup> having earlier construed it to be a technical military term, would seem to be most accurate. In describing the reliefs found among the remains of Nineveh, A. H. Layard<sup>48</sup> pointed to the grandeur with which even the horses pulling the Assyrian chariots (cf. vv 4 and 5) were clad. Embroidered cloths were frequently draped over the backs of the steeds.<sup>49</sup> Ezekiel seems to have this very thing in view when he states "Dedan was your merchant in elegant saddle blankets" (27:19). The "horses" or "chariots" or "chargers"<sup>50</sup> flashing as fire would evoke a fearsome image, just as the רָכָב of Hab 1:8.<sup>51</sup>

Their horses are swifter than leopards,  
Fiercer than wolves at dusk.  
Their cavalry gallops headlong;  
Their horsemen come from afar . . .<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, the "cover" draped over the horses leading the war-chariots could have furnished a third "red" object, along with the shield and uniform. Indeed, "flashing as fire" would be a fitting description.<sup>53</sup>

The "spears quivering" (הַבָּרָשִׁים הָרָעָלִו) were the spears (similar to the Akkadian "staff," *paruššu*)<sup>54</sup> of the cavalry (the second fighting

<sup>44</sup>T. K. Cheyne ("Influence on Assyria in Unexpected Places," *JBL* 17 [1898] 106) devised a more fanciful emendation and rendering of v 4: "The warriors gird on their tunics, and the fighting men put on their shoes."

<sup>45</sup>A. Haldar, *Studies in the Book of Nahum* (Uppsala: Lundquist, 1947) 44.

<sup>46</sup>E.g., Davidson (*Books*, 26), Smith (*Commentary*, 314) and Rudolph (*Micha-Nahum*, 165).

<sup>47</sup>"Untergang," 97.

<sup>48</sup>*Nineveh and Its Remains* (2 vols.; New York: Putnam, 1849) 2.272-74.

<sup>49</sup>Cheyne, "Influence," pp. 106-7, saw this as a harness or decoration for the horse. Further, M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, "Zur ugaritischen Lexicographie," *BO* 25 (1968) 100-101, argue that "wool" or "linen," not *steel*, appears to be the constitution of פָּלָדוֹת. See also C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (AnOr 38; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965) 2045.

<sup>50</sup>So Davidson, *Books*, p. 27.

<sup>51</sup>A common practice was to use mares for war-horses, whose excitement over mares was exploited. See M. Pope, "A Mare in Pharaoh's Chariotry," *BASOR* 200 (1970) 60.

<sup>52</sup>Habakkuk's "burden" is similar: vengeance and judgment.

<sup>53</sup>Cf. Rev 9:17 with its comparable apocalyptic imagery.

<sup>54</sup>T. H. Gaster, "Two Notes on Nahum," *JBL* 63 (1944) 52.

unit), whose shafts were made of wood,<sup>55</sup> and not those of the foot-soldiers, who, serving as shock troops, were decisive in assaulting the fortified walls.<sup>56</sup>

## 2:5

The chariots "rage" in the streets and they "reverberate as thunder"<sup>57</sup> in the squares. Nahum is using vivid imagery to heighten the effect of the vision-report. Note how effective the "echo" notion is in the "broad ways" or "squares."<sup>58</sup> The "streets" would most likely be in the suburban areas.<sup>59</sup> Significantly, Assyria's foremost military weapon, the chariot corps, was comprised of highly developed chariots drawn by a team of three horses with a two- or three-man crew.<sup>60</sup> The raging back and forth of enemy chariots within the city would indicate, at any rate, that the double fortifications of the Assyrian capital were of no avail.<sup>61</sup>

In 2:5b, the prophet further depicts the mad fury of the invading chariots storming through Nineveh as blazing torches, flashes of lightning. C. H. Gordon<sup>62</sup> maintains לָפִיד ("torch") to be a non-Semitic loan-word and suggests that new kinds of torches and lamps were introduced by the technically superior Philistines. S. Segert<sup>63</sup> looks for the Akkadian equivalent in the Mari texts.

The following rendering then of v 5 would relate the climactic level of intensity which has been building in 2:3-11 thus far:

In the streets the chariots are madly raging;  
They reverberate in the open squares,  
Their appearance being like torches  
That give flashes of lightning.

## 2:6

In v 6, we incur a stroke of irony as Nahum alludes to past Assyrian military splendor which is contrasted with the present de-

<sup>55</sup>Cf. Gordon, *UT*, p. 603, where Baal's spear is called a "tree of lightning."

<sup>56</sup>Yadin, *Warfare*, 291.

<sup>57</sup>J. Reider, "Studies in Hebrew Roots and Their Etymology," *AJSL* 34 (1917) 68.

<sup>58</sup>Cathcart (*Nahum*, 90) notes that it is in the *squares* that people will be yelling (cf. v 9: צָעָקוּ וְצָעָקוּ).

<sup>59</sup>So Billerbeck and Jeremias, "Untergang," p. 100.

<sup>60</sup>Yadin, *Warfare*, 297-98. The third horse served as a replacement (by the time of Sargon II, some chariots even utilized a team of four horses). Under Aššurbanipal, the chariot became most advanced, carrying a crew of four men—a driver, an archer, and two shield-bearers.

<sup>61</sup>See n. 71 on the somewhat exaggerated ancient descriptions of Nineveh's fortifications, which, to be sure, reflect superior defensive measures.

<sup>62</sup>"Homer and the Bible," *HUCA* 26 (1955) 61.

<sup>63</sup>"Zur Etymologie on Lappid 'Fackel,'" *ZAW* 74 (1962) 323.

bacle. Instead of exhibiting valor and courage as that of old ("he recalls the nobles" of past military campaigns), they are now stumbling in their own steps. Contra T. H. Gaster<sup>64</sup> and K. Cathcart<sup>65</sup> ("he musters") as well as J. M. P. Smith<sup>66</sup> ("he summons"), the context seems to require a touch of irony—irony which provides the appropriate contrast to the "stumbling" or "staggering" (כָּשַׁל). Here the LXX, μνησθήσονται οἱ μεγιστᾶνες αὐτῶν ("they recall their great men"), catches the correct sense, as does W. Rudolph:<sup>67</sup> "He remembers his men of pomp."

They "hasten" or "press" to the wall, that is, the fortress-wall, not the wall of the temple (contra Eaton),<sup>68</sup> for the process of the siege is being intensified. Nineveh is now being *stormed* from the outside and its walls cannot withhold the flood of incoming assailants. In Volume II of his *Nineveh and Its Remains*, A. H. Layard<sup>69</sup> rehearses the procedure of how the city would have been stormed. The first step was the use of the battering-ram. Isa 37:33, Jer 32:24 and Ezek 17:13 mention the use of "banks," "forts," "mounts" and "towers." The Assyrian army utilized infantry, cavalry and chariot corps. What distinguished Assyrian military prowess was its ability to combine the storming of the ramparts, scaling of the city-walls, tunneling, exploiting breaches in the walls and the use of psychological warfare against the enemy.<sup>70</sup> Ezekiel's symbolizing of siege upon Jerusalem is here worth comparison: "Lay siege against it; erect a fort against it; build a ramp, set up camps against it and battering-rams around it" (4:2).

Ladders were used against the gates of the city as well as to scale the walls at vulnerable points. Soldiers would man the base of the ladders to provide defense.<sup>71</sup> "Preparing the cover" (הִכְן הַסִּכָּה) refers to the mobile protective covers which were put up to shield the assailants from stones, arrows, etc., being hurled from the wall.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>64</sup>"Two Notes," 52.

<sup>65</sup>*More Studies*, 6.

<sup>66</sup>*Commentary*, 314.

<sup>67</sup>*Micha-Nahum*, 168.

<sup>68</sup>*Obadiah, Nahum*, 65.

<sup>69</sup>Pp. 281–86.

<sup>70</sup>See, for example, Yadin, in *Warfare*, pp. 318–23. In no other period, writes Yadin, was warfare on fortified cities so highly developed as by the Assyrians (p. 313).

<sup>71</sup>Xenophon, in *Anabasis* 3.4.7, parts of which are reproduced in P. Haupt, "Xenophon's Account of the Fall of Nineveh," *JAOS* 28 (1907) 99–107, and Lucian (cited in Layard, *Nineveh*, 2.128) seem to offer somewhat exaggerated accounts of Nineveh's wall in depicting its ruins, claiming it to have been 100 feet high with a thickness of twenty-five feet. Further, it was to have included 1500 towers (each of which was 200 feet high), being constructed by a corvée of 1,400,000 men over a period of eight years. Xenophon viewed the ruins some 200 years after the city's destruction.

<sup>72</sup>Parrot, *Nineveh*, 82. When considering reliefs which depict the infantrymen who are laying siege, one is immediately struck by the large top-curved shield of the

Further, battering-rams, which had appeared during the reign of Aššurbanipal,<sup>73</sup> aided in storming the gates and walls. Soldiers operating them (the mechanism consisted of a wooden frame perched on a chassis with six wheels)<sup>74</sup> were covered on the sides by shields.<sup>75</sup> This scene, as depicted in v 6, is illustrated frequently on Ninevite reliefs.

2:7

There can be little doubt that the "gates of the rivers" (שַׁעַרֵי הַנְּהַרֹת) refer not to the gates to the city, rather to the "water- or canal-gates."<sup>76</sup> Bordered on the west side by the Tigris, Nineveh was also divided by a mountain stream running through the city and surrounded by a moat which measured fifteen feet deep and one hundred fifty feet wide.<sup>77</sup> D. J. Wiseman<sup>78</sup> offers the suggestion that breaches in Nineveh's wall may well have been due to an unusually high tide of the Tigris. P. E. Botta,<sup>79</sup> one hundred years earlier, had advanced a similar notion, maintaining that as much as twenty furlongs (roughly two-and-one-half miles) of wall may have been swept away. Regardless of any speculation, the mention in 1:8 of an "over-running flood"<sup>80</sup> and "devastation," in addition to "pools of water" and "fleeing" in 2:9, would indicate that here we are not merely dealing with a literary metaphor, or with ancient Near East chaos-symbolism,<sup>81</sup> but rather a literal flooding of the canal-gates of the Tigris. Xenophon<sup>82</sup> and Diodorus Siculus<sup>83</sup> each confirm the flooding based on traditions they received.<sup>84</sup>

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Assyrian soldier. It protects him from arrows being shot from the wall above (see renderings in Y. Yadin, "The Earliest Representation of a Siege Scene and a 'Scythian Bow' from Mari," *IEJ* 22 [1972] 93.

<sup>73</sup>Yadin, *Warfare*, 314.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>So P. Humbert, "La vision de Nahoum 2,4-11," *Afo* 5 (1928) 16; K. Cathcart, *Nahum*, p. 95; *ibid.*, *More Studies*, p. 7; and P. Machinist, "Assyria," 735.

<sup>77</sup>Haupt, "Xenophon," 99.

<sup>78</sup>*Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1956) 17.

<sup>79</sup>*Buried City*, 37.

<sup>80</sup>See the discussion of "water" in the commentary on 2:9, p. 9. Cf. also R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Assarhaddons, Königs von Assyrien* (Afo Beih. 9; Graz: Im Selbstverlage des Ausgebers, 1958).

<sup>81</sup>Contra J. D. W. Watts, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (Cambridge: Cambridge U., 1975) 113.

<sup>82</sup>*Anabasis* 3.4.12.

<sup>83</sup>*Library* 2.26-27.

<sup>84</sup>From a clay prism of Sennacherib's time, Nineveh possesses fifteen gates on the east side and five on the west or river-side (cf. Sellin, *Zwölfprophetenbuch*, 2.368).



A fitting contrast to the "flooding" of water in the city is Nahum's image of the "palace melting" (הִהִיכֵל נִמּוֹג). The gutting of the city is thorough. The royal palace (not Ištar's temple),<sup>85</sup> a work of lofty magnificence, is dissolved in the midst of the catastrophe. It is interesting that the palace was situated on the *west* side of the city, nearest the river. Doubtless the prophet has the scenes which were etched on the walls of the royal residence—a constant reminder of Assyria's prowess in conquering—in mind as he reports the vision.

2:8

G. R. Driver<sup>86</sup> responded in 1964 to the hilarity he found in traditional commentary on Nah 2:8 concerning the cryptic הִצֵּב. Not a few notions have been offered as to its correct interpretation.<sup>87</sup> These include (1) the Assyrian proper name *Huṣabu*,<sup>88</sup> (2) the rabbinic view that this is an inference to an unknown queen (queens were made to "stand" [גָּלְתָה] at the right hand),<sup>89</sup> (3) a transposing of the third word הִצֵּלְתָה, re-pointing it so as to render it the Hebrew equivalent of the Assyrian "queen" (*etelletu*),<sup>90</sup> (4) a contracted form of הִעֲצֵבָה, a "female idol" (cf. Isa 48:5),<sup>91</sup> (5) an emendation to read הִצְבִּי ("the beauty"),<sup>92</sup> (6) agreement with the LXX reading ἡ ὑπὸστασις while citing the Akkadian *gullatu* ("column base"),<sup>93</sup> (7) a cryptic name for Nineveh,<sup>94</sup> (8) a slur,<sup>95</sup> and (9) the equivalent of the goddess Ištar.<sup>96</sup>

As a suggested solution to this problem, we would cite several factors without seeking radically to emend the MT: (1) the verb "carry away" which is immediately following, (2) the practice of the Assyrians after they have laid siege to a city, (3) the feminine endings in v 8, (4) the custom of addressing a city by its queen,<sup>97</sup> (5) the

<sup>85</sup> Contra Eaton, *Obadiah, Nahum*, 65.

<sup>86</sup> "Farewell to Queen Huzzab!" *JTS* 15 (1964) 296–98.

<sup>87</sup> M. Breitenreicher (*Nineve und Nahum* [München: Lentner, 1861] 71) counted at least twenty different renderings.

<sup>88</sup> Halevy, "Nahum," 112.

<sup>89</sup> Driver, "Farewell," 296.

<sup>90</sup> van der Woude, "Letter," 114.

<sup>91</sup> J. Reider, "A New Ishtar Epithet in the Bible," *JNES* 8 (1949) 104–7.

<sup>92</sup> Cathcart, *More Studies*, 7.

<sup>93</sup> H. W. F. Saggs, "Nahum and the Fall of Nineveh," *JTS* 20 (1969) 220.

<sup>94</sup> Davidson, *Books*, 30.

<sup>95</sup> Haldar, *Studies*, 52.

<sup>96</sup> A. Van Hoonacker, *Les douze petits prophètes* (Paris: Etudes bibliques, 1908)

438.

<sup>97</sup> See, for example, A. Fitzgerald, "The Mythological Background for the Presentation of Jerusalem as a Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the Old Testament," *CBQ* 34 (1972) 403–16. Fitzgerald (p. 405) notes that ancient capital cities were virtually equated with their goddesses.

forceful role Ištar played in Assyrian war, and therefore, in Assyria's demise, and (6) the relationship between הַצַּב and "her maidens"<sup>98</sup> following. The "bemoaning of her"<sup>99</sup> and "breast-beating" in 2:8b and c appear as consequences of the "carrying away" in 2:8a. The visual effect being generated here is one of strong irony. M. Delcor<sup>100</sup> has correctly noted the context in which 2:8 is found: ruin. While the Ištar symbolism is absent from Nahum 1, it surfaces in 2:8 and 3:4–6. In texts stemming from the time of Aššurbanipal, the patron-goddess is frequently called "Ištar of Nineveh, the heavenly queen."<sup>101</sup>

Once a siege had been successful, a common scene was to find women appearing at the walls begging for mercy.<sup>102</sup> Normal procedure was that an indiscriminate slaughter followed. Any women, children or cattle remaining would be led away captive by the Assyrians on carts drawn by oxen. If indeed a "queen-type" is the focus of 2:8—and her cultic devotees are implied in the verse—then it is fitting that the prophet would announce the breaking of the Assyrian backbone in such symbolic terms: "Ištar of Nineveh, genius of war,<sup>103</sup> that "lady of Nineveh" and heavenly queen, is being hauled away captive as the spoil of the Lord of Hosts!" We agree with L. Gry<sup>104</sup> that, at the *very least*, Ištar should be in the background of the oracle depicting Nineveh's demise. For she was "foremost among the gods," "mistress of tumult," the one "who adorns battles."<sup>105</sup> Nahum would not spare so strategic a motif!

## 2:9

Nineveh was "like a pool of water" (כְּבִרְכַּת־מַיִם), strong and resourceful, through her whole history,<sup>106</sup> indeed, from the begin-

<sup>98</sup> In a Hurrian hymn dedicated to Ištar, praise is offered twice to her attendants (for a translation of the hymn, see H. G. Güterbock, "A Hurro-Hittite Hymn to Istar," *JAOS* 103 [1983] 155–58.

<sup>99</sup> On "moaning," see Ezek 7:16. On doves and mourning, see Isa 59:11.

<sup>100</sup> "Allusions à la déesse Ištar in Nahum 2,8?" *Bib* 58 (1977) 72–73.

<sup>101</sup> In his *Annals*, Aššurbanipal will use this designation twelve times in ten columns (Stele Rm 1). The text is reproduced in Smith, *Keilschrifttexte*, 1.3–83.

<sup>102</sup> Layard, *Nineveh*, 1.286.

<sup>103</sup> One might indeed argue, as M. Weippert ("‘Heiliger Krieg’ in Israel und Assyrien," *ZAW* 84 [1972] 460–93), that Assyria practiced its own form of "holy war." Consider an excerpt from an Esarhaddon text: "I, Esarhaddon, . . . in trusting the great gods, my lords, did not turn my back in the midst of battle . . . As a lion I waxed furious . . . To the gods Aššur . . . to Ištar of Nineveh I lifted my hands. With their dependable word they sent me . . . : 'Go! Do not hold back! At your side we go and slay your enemies.' . . . Quickly I marched on the way back to Nineveh . . . Ištar, the lord of war and battle . . . stood at my side and loosed their battleplan, so that they all cried, 'This is our war!'" (cited from R. Borger, *Asarhaddons*, 43f.).

<sup>104</sup> "Un Episode des Derniers Jours de Nineve (Nahum ii,8)," *RB* 7 (1910) 402.

<sup>105</sup> From a text of Tiglath-Pileser I (see Grayson, *Inscriptions*, p. 52).

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Jonah 1:2 and 4:11.

ning.<sup>107</sup> Her strength, however, in v 9, is not merely "receding";<sup>108</sup> it is vanishing cataclysmically, "fleeing" (נס). The prophet's depiction here is reminiscent of an image commonly found in Assyrian texts: the king advancing into battle is likened to raging water,<sup>109</sup> symbolic of terrifying destruction. In sharp contrast to her proverbial invincibility, enterprising spirit, and aggression, Nineveh is suddenly robbed and impotent. In the prophetic eye, it is Yahweh, the ruler of the nations and divine warrior, who manifests Himself as an *overwhelming flood* (1:8). Nineveh's strength is no more. Verse 9 resembles very much a battle description found in Jeremiah:

What do I see?  
 They are terrified,  
 They are retreating,  
 Their warriors are defeated.  
 They flee (נס) in haste without looking back  
 And there is terror on every side.

(46:5)

In spite of man's cry to "Stay!" (עֲמֹדוּ, עֲמֹדוּ), Nineveh's resources (note the emphatic pronoun הִיא: "the waters of *her*") are vanishing. In contradistinction to the inundation coming from without, her strength is vanquished within. Nahum compares the unstoppable stormers with the unstable fleers.

## 2:10

Verse 10 rushes toward fulfillment of Nahum's opening proclamation: "The Lord takes vengeance . . . The Lord takes vengeance . . ." (1:2). The exhortation is now to plunder. The treasures which were brought home by Aššurbanipal's army from Thebes alone were fabulous.<sup>110</sup> The testimony of the Assyrian kings which became ritual was:

I scattered, I stormed and conquered the town . . . I carried away booty."<sup>111</sup>

I marched . . . , destroying, tearing down and burning . . . , carrying booty away from them which was beyond counting.<sup>112</sup>

Of the tribute one king paid to Sennacherib, the king wrote:

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Gen 10:9-12.

<sup>108</sup> Contra Haldar, *Studies*, p. 55.

<sup>109</sup> See Machinist, "Assyria," 726-27. Cf. also Jer 47:2 and Dan 11:10, 40.

<sup>110</sup> See, for example, pp. 5-6 in Smith, *Keilschriften*.

<sup>111</sup> J. B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1958) 189.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

... thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, precious stones, antimony, large cuts of red stone, couches (inlaid) with ivory, *nîmedu*-chairs (inlaid) with ivory, elephant hides, ebony-wood, box-wood (and) all kinds of valuable treasures, his (own) daughters, concubines, male and female musicians.<sup>113</sup>

To be sure, after several hundred years of military conquest in which spoils were continuously hauled back home, Nineveh must have been a store for incomparable wealth. Thus, Nahum's prophetic call is to "plunder" (נָבַז used twice). Indeed, "the supply is endless."

## 2:11

In v 11 is contained a picture which D. Hillers<sup>114</sup> would describe as a "reaction to bad news," stated mildly! The reaction is a result of being "pillaged," "plundered" and "stripped" (note the strong assonance of the Hebrew verbs in v 11: נִבְזָה, מְבֻזָּה and מְלָקָה). People's knees are knocking, hearts have melted, faces wax pale, literally "withdrawing their color" (פָּנֵי כָלֶם קִבְצוּ פָארוֹר),<sup>115</sup> and their loins are, as it were, in travail. Similar descriptions are found elsewhere in the prophetic corpus. Jeremiah asks sarcastically,

Then why do I see every strong man  
With his hands on his stomach as a woman in labor?  
And every face waxed pale?

(30:6)

And similarly, by Isaiah:

... every hand will go limp,  
Every man's heart will melt.  
Terror will seize them.  
Pain and anguish will grip them;  
They will writhe in pain as a woman in labor.  
They will look aghast at each other,  
Their faces aflame.

(13:7-8)

Indeed, Nahum's depiction is a reaction to *very* bad news. Nineveh's hour has finally come.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 200-202.

<sup>114</sup>"A Convention in Hebrew Literature: The Reaction to Bad News," *ZAW* 77 (1965) 86-90.

<sup>115</sup>This very same expression is found in Joel 2:6b.

## CONCLUSION: THE "LION-HUNT"

With the use of utterly fantastic imagery and fiery zeal, the prophet Nahum has pronounced a vision-oracle against Nineveh, the Assyrian stronghold. As if standing in the royal palace himself and gazing at the spectacular reliefs depicting the king of Assyria who fears nothing as he hunts his lions and trains for war, the prophet adds a taunting epilogue:

Where now is the lion's den,  
 The place where they fed their young,  
 Where the lion and lioness went,  
 And the cubs, with nothing to fear?  
 The lion killed enough for his cubs  
 And strangled the prey for his mate,  
 Filling his lairs with the kill  
 And his dens with the prey.

(2:12-13)

It is the Lord of Hosts Who promises to combat the lion-king of Nineveh. The stalker of prey, in the prophetic vision-report, has become stalked by Yahweh. True irony is at work. In 2:12, Nahum remembers one more time the insatiable craving of the Assyrians for plunder, before announcing that יהוה צבאות would cut off His prey from the earth (2:14).<sup>116</sup>

The lion-imagery employed by the prophet is crucial, for it represents the self-asserting autonomy with which one acts. Of the fearsome northern empire it has been stated:

. . . the terrifying mask that was deliberately turned toward the outside world was undeniably effective. The Old Testament reflects in numerous poignant passages the fear inspired by Assyrian military might and by the ruthless aggressiveness directed against all those nations that found themselves in the path of Assyrian expansion.<sup>117</sup>

However, the hunter had now become the hunted.

<sup>116</sup>Yahweh's threat in v 14, "I will burn . . . the sword will devour . . . I will cut off . . .," may reflect, as K. Cathcart ("Treaty-Curses and the Book of Nahum," *CBQ* 35 [1973] 179-87) has suggested, the curse invoked on a party breaking an ancient treaty.

<sup>117</sup>H. D. Laswell et al., *Process and Communication in World History—I: The Symbolic Instrument in Early Times* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1979) 133-34.

## BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF NAH 2:3-11

*Divine Kingship*

The divine kingship of Yahweh is a central theme of the OT. He rules over the chaos-waters, over the forces of nature, over all the nations surrounding Israel. His kingship over the nations is particularly prominent in the prophetic corpus, and especially so among the eighth-century B.C. prophets.<sup>118</sup> In Isaiah, the theme emerges chiefly from a restorative point of view. Cyrus is hand-picked to carry out the divine purpose (44:28). That Yahweh reigns is, in effect, Isaiah's "gospel."

Nebuchadnezzar is called "the servant of Yahweh" by Jeremiah (25:9 and 27:6). In principle, this designation extends to the pagan rulers, even the likes of Sargon, Sennacherib and Aššurbanipal. In Daniel, Yahweh is expressly the One removing and promoting kings (2:21-22). The book itself is an active commentary on such.

As for the Nahum prophecy, it is Assyria which—albeit involuntarily—must submit to the will and purpose of Yahweh, the Lord of Hosts.

*Divine Justice*

Both Jonah and Nahum end with a question. Nineveh, the seat of Ištar, called "the great city" (Jonah 1:2 and 4:11), whose wickedness had risen before the Lord (Jonah 1:2), had been extended mercy some one hundred years prior to the Nahum prophecy. However, in the end, her would was "grievous" and no "healing" was possible, so widespread was her cruelty (Nah 3:19). Even the sins of the nations do not escape divine wrath. Yahweh is the Supreme Avenger (Nah 1:2).<sup>119</sup>

*Divine Warfare*

Nahum's prophecy illustrates a significant motif: the divine "reversal" of events concerning Israel and the nations. From the period of the conquest until the exile, Yahweh manifested Himself as the "divine warrior." On one level, He fought for Israel against the nations (in which category the Nahum oracle fits). When Israel had breached covenant, however, Yahweh fought against *His people*. Either way, the prophets were adamant that it was *Yahweh* Who was doing the fighting.

<sup>118</sup>For example, Nah 2:1 (1:15, Eng. Bib.) is reminiscent of Isa 52:7: "Behold, there on the mountains, the feet of the one who brings good news, the one who proclaims peace."

<sup>119</sup>On the contrast of Nahum to Jonah, see T. F. Glasson, "The Final Question in Nahum and Jonah," *ExpTim* 81 (1969) 54-55.



The exercise of divine warring in the OT is frequently termed the "Day of Yahweh." Normally depicting calamity, upheaval and distress transpiring at a particular juncture in Israel's history, the "Day of Yahweh" involved Israel as well as the nations. And for Assyria, that "day" was "now" (1:13).



# CHURCH AND GENTILE CULTS AT CORINTH

MARK HARDING

*Paul finds himself needing to address a number of issues in 1 Corinthians in which the Gentile cultic heritage of many of the readers intrudes. The two most significant of these issues are the eating of meat offered to idols and believers' participation in temple banquets. Scholars have argued that Paul uses terminology of believers which echoes and perhaps imitates the cults and, consequently, that Paul saw believers engaged in a Christian cult. However, from an analysis of Paul's discussion of the matters in question in the letter, it is argued that the redemptive achievement of Christ in history, and the response of believers to that work as proclaimed in the gospel, repudiates cult as the model for that response.*

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## INTRODUCTION

KARL Donfried's recent article "The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence"<sup>1</sup> investigates the first century A.D. cultic context which surrounded the church in Thessalonica. His study suggests to this writer the possibility of extending the inquiry both to the cultic background presupposed by Paul in his correspondence with the Corinthians, and suggested by commentators in their exegesis of the first letter in particular. This essay, therefore, attempts to investigate (1) the nature of the cultic milieu in which the Corinthians lived as reflected in the correspondence, and (2) the extent to which commentators have been correct in their interpretation of certain passages from that cultic perspective.

## FOOD OFFERED TO IDOLS

Paul finds it necessary to address a pastoral problem which has arisen with regard to the propriety of believers eating food offered to

<sup>1</sup>NTS 31 (1985) 336-56.

idols. This was meat which had been slaughtered in ritual sacrifice to the gods before their images, and among that sold in the market.<sup>2</sup>

This meat is termed ἱερό- or θεόθυτον ("food offered to a god") by the Gentiles. Paul follows the Jewish practice in 1 Corinthians 8 when he employs the pejorative term εἰδωλόθυτον ("food offered to an idol").<sup>3</sup> It is the meat left over from the sacrifice, i.e., after the god has received his/her share via the altar fire. In sacrifices to the dead and to the chthonian gods (the gods of the underworld), the victim was wholly immolated.<sup>4</sup> But in the sacrifices to the Olympian gods, the bulk of the meat was consumed by the sacrificer and his family and friends in a meal at the shrine. The Greeks accounted for this sacrificial practice in myth.<sup>5</sup>

Returning to 1 Corinthians, the ἱερόθυτον was that which had come onto the market after the festivals when the numbers of victims were large.<sup>6</sup> That not all meat on sale was necessarily sacrificial is a

<sup>2</sup>See H. J. Cadbury, "The Macellum of Corinth," *JBL* 53 (1934) 134-41.

<sup>3</sup>For a discussion of the Greek terminology see H. S. Songer, "Problems Arising from the Worship of Idols: 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1," *RevExp* 80 (1983) 363-75 (364-65); see also *TDNT* 2 (1964) 377-79.

<sup>4</sup>See J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922) 16; Homer, *Iliad* 23:161-225 (the funeral pyre for Patroclus), Apollonius of Rhodes, *The Voyage of the Argo* 3:1026-36.

<sup>5</sup>Hesiod (*Theogony* 540f.) relates how Prometheus—the great champion of mankind—slaughtered a great ox and set two packages before Zeus; one containing the meat wrapped in the stomach of the beast, the other containing the bones but wrapped in "shining fat." Asking Zeus to choose which package he would like, the god (succumbing to the attractive presentation) chose the latter—the bones, the useless portion. "Because of this," concludes Hesiod, "the tribes of men upon earth burn white bones to the deathless gods upon fragrant altars" (*Theogony* 557). Cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 3.429-64, *Iliad* 1.457-74 where thigh bones are laid on the altar covered in fat with raw flesh laid on top. The usual ritual by which animals were sacrificed involved a procession to the altar undertaken by sacrificer, his company, and the victim (cf. *Odyssey* 3.456, *Iliad* 1.460). Once there the sacrificer offered prayers, invocations, wishes and vows. The victim, having been slaughtered, was dismembered. The inner organs were roasted on the altar fire. The sacrificer and his company tasted these thus sharing the meal with the god. Then the inedible remains, the bones, were burnt along with fat cut from the thigh of the victim. Small amounts of other food were also burned on the altar with wine added as a libation (cf. Phil 2:17, 2 Tim 4:6). The meat was then prepared for consumption by the worshipers at the sanctuary. In reality, then, the god received very little indeed. See W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985) 56-59. Burkert bases his reconstruction on passages such as Homer, *Odyssey* 3.43-50 and *Iliad* 2.421-31.

<sup>6</sup>J. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, Good News Studies 6 (Wilmington: Glazier, 1983) 161. Writing of the annual "Little Panathenaic" festival in Athens—the "great" Panathenaic was celebrated every 4 years—Burkert says that the city officials received their share of the meat of 100 sheep and cows slaughtered at the great altar of Athena on the Acropolis. The remaining meat was then "distributed to the whole

reasonable assumption. Cadbury informs us that at Pompeii, at least, not all meat sold in that *macellum* was sacrificial meat.<sup>7</sup>

Should a believer eat such meat? Both the Jews and any believers they influenced would have insisted that such meat was tainted by idolatry. Moreover, it had not been killed in the prescribed way laid down in the Torah (see Lev 17:10–13). No tithe had been paid on it. Such meat should neither be bought nor eaten. Therefore the Jew was forbidden to eat.<sup>8</sup> Pressure could have come also from within the congregation from those believers who were Gentiles and who now sought to avoid all contact with the cults. They had once participated in the cultic round. They once had eaten sacrificial meat as a matter of course. Such custom had now produced a built-in reaction to sacred objects; a reaction which they were not strong enough in faith to eradicate.<sup>9</sup> Paul refers to these believers whose conscience is troubled as the “weak.”

The weak among the believers were apparently countered by those in the church who were of the opinion that since there was one God only there were no gods at all standing behind the idols of temple and shrine. If the statue—the cult image—was popularly regarded as the “residence” of the god,<sup>10</sup> then, since there was only one God, food offered to the gods resident in the images was food offered to non-entities. The ritual was meaningless. The meat could not be tainted. These many divinities—so-called gods and lords (1 Cor 8:5)—simply did not exist. For the “strong” Corinthians, food offered to idols could be eaten without scruple.<sup>11</sup>

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population in the market place,” *Greek Religion* 232 (cf. 440 n. 34). See also G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Early Christianity* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982) 127–28.

<sup>7</sup>See Cadbury, 141, and G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 481 n. 21.

<sup>8</sup>See Exod 34:14–16, 4 Macc 1:2; G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 481 n. 25, C. K. Barrett, “Things Sacrificed to Idols,” *NTS* 11 (1965) 138–53 (146), and W. F. Orr & J. A. Walther, *I Corinthians*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1976) 228–29.

<sup>9</sup>See W. F. Orr & J. A. Walther, *I Corinthians*, 254. Perhaps, as Barrett suggests, Rom 14:2 introduces us to a Jewish believer unable to obtain meat slaughtered in the correct Jewish manner and free of idolatrous association, “Things Sacrificed to Idols,” 140. On the question of the conscience of the weak, see P. W. Gooch, “The conscience in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10,” *NTS* 33 (1987) 244–54. Gooch argues persuasively that Paul’s use of *συνείδησις* in these chapters refers to the self-perception of the believer, not his moral conscience. The weak do not have a robust sense of their Christian identity (250).

<sup>10</sup>C. K. Barrett, *I Corinthians* (London: A. & C. Black, 1968) 191.

<sup>11</sup>Theissen, *Social Setting*, 121–43 (see especially 123–25) argues unpersuasively that the terms “strong” and “weak” are further related to the social status of the Corinthians. The “strong” are the socially privileged few (see 1 Cor 1:26–27) among the Corinthian believers. For them attendance at cult banquets was an integral and unavoidable aspect of their civic responsibility. The weak, on the other hand, were to

Paul sides with the strong to the extent that he argues that there is indeed one God and one Lord (1 Cor 8:6). Because the whole world belongs to the Lord, Paul argues in 1 Cor 10:26, meat both before and after the ritual still belongs to God. Robertson and Plummer helpfully paraphrase, "Meat does not cease to be God's creature and possession because it has been offered in sacrifice: What is his will not pollute any one."<sup>12</sup> Meat *per se* is a thing indifferent. "Eat whatever is sold in the market," Paul counsels in 1 Cor 10:25.<sup>13</sup> In the context of chapter 8 where the issue is dealt with first, he insists, nevertheless, that the conscience of the "weak" brother must be guarded. "What if your weak brother should come upon you eating food offered to idols in an idol's temple?" he asks in 8:10. "Won't he be encouraged to eat food offered to idols and so sin against his conscience?" "Your freedom to eat," Paul continues, addressing the strong, "then becomes a sin against Christ" (v 12). Here we are moving from the issue of meat to that of the context in which sacrificial meat might be eaten.

#### TEMPLE BANQUETS

In 8:10 Paul asks the question of the strong, "If anyone sees you a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols?" One could encounter this food offered to idols in three ways—on sale in the market; at private banquets in a home where the meat served may have been purchased from the market and had been offered to

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be found at the lower end of the social scale. As former Jews, they could only have eaten such meat with a bad conscience, or as Gentiles who had little opportunity to eat meat in the course of everyday life, the chance to eat meat in a cultic setting presented a "genuine temptation" (127). For a response to Theissen's arguments see W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) 69–70.

<sup>12</sup>A. T. Robertson and A. Plummer, *1 Corinthians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911) 22.

<sup>13</sup>For a helpful discussion of Paul's attitude toward the problem of ἱερόθυτον see C. K. Barrett, "Things Sacrificed to Idols," 138–53. Barrett believes that Paul is at odds with the "Apostolic Decree" (see Acts 15:20) in not forbidding all consumption of ἱερόθυτον regardless of the context in which it was eaten, writing, "In permitting the eating of εἰδωλόθυτα, Paul allows what elsewhere in the New Testament was strictly forbidden" (149). Cf. J. C. Brunt, "Rejected, Ignored or Misunderstood? The Fate of Paul's Approach to the Problem of Food Offered to Idols in Early Christianity," *NTS* 31 (1985) 113–24. However, Barrett appears to moderate this view in his more recent but much briefer comments on this question in "The Apostolic Decree of Acts 15.29," *ABR XXXV* (1987) 50–59 (50–52). Here he suggests that the Decree in forbidding the eating of εἰδωλόθυτα (see Acts 15:29) is in fact to be interpreted in the light of James' earlier reference to τὰ ἀλισγήματα τῶν εἰδώλων in v 20. Of these defilings, eating sacrificial meat, Barrett concludes, "pins this down to a special (and perhaps the most insidious) contact with pagan religion" (52). He seems to be referring here to eating such food at a temple.



idols before sale; and, at a banquet in a temple precinct. Paul has the third of these contexts in mind in 8:10. In chapter 8 he passes no judgment on the strong believer for eating at the temple *per se*. He does, however, hold him accountable for causing a weak brother to violate his conscience (v 12).

In discussion of Greek sacrificial practice (n. 5) it was noted how the sacrificial occasion was also the occasion for a meal—the diners dining on the sacrificial victim. The sacrificer and his company, by eating of the sacrifice, participated with the god. It was a meal shared.<sup>14</sup> All the meat had to be consumed. Temples provided banqueting rooms for the purpose of the meal. The Asclepeum in Corinth had three such rooms which, writes Murphy-O'Connor, could accommodate 11 people each. Small tables were provided and cooking appears to have been done in each of them. Roebuck notes the existence in the center of each room of a block for a brazier.<sup>15</sup> They could be hired out for private functions (in much the same way as one can hire a room today at a reception house or club). Murphy-O'Connor suggests that while some functions held in these rooms were purely social, others were held as “gestures of gratitude to the god for such happy events as a cure, a birth, a coming of age, or a marriage.”<sup>16</sup> The Asclepeum was not the only establishment of this kind in Corinth. Greg Horsley points out that 40 banqueting rooms have been excavated in the Demeter-Kore precinct at the foot of Acrocorinth, a precinct which dates from before the sack of Corinth by the Romans in 146 B.C.<sup>17</sup>

Papyri have been recovered in which diners are invited to the god's *table* in his temple.<sup>18</sup> Horsley cites three such papyri:

1. Nikephorus asks you to dine at a banquet of the Lord Sarapis in the Birth-House on the 23rd, from the 9th hour.
2. Herais asks you to dine in the dining room of the Sarapeum at a banquet of the Lord Sarapis tomorrow, namely the 11th, from the 9th hour.
3. The god calls you to a banquet being held in Thoereum tomorrow from the 9th hour.

<sup>14</sup>Homer, *Odyssey* 3:429–64, Aelius Aristides, *Orations* 45:27. See also n. 23.

<sup>15</sup>C. Roebuck, *Corinth*, Vol. XIV, *The Asclepeum and Lerna* (Princeton: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1951) 52.

<sup>16</sup>M. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 164.

<sup>17</sup>G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, Vol. 1 (North Ryde, NSW: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University, 1981) 7. Horsley cites the research of N. Bookidis and J. E. Fisher, “Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth,” *Hesperia* 43 (1974) 267–307 (267).

<sup>18</sup>Horsley, *New Documents*, 1.5–9. See also *P. Oxy* 110 (A.D. ii).

The god was both host and guest at the banquet, concludes H. C. Youtie.<sup>19</sup> Horsley writes, "The papyrus invitations . . . documents in quite a striking manner the situation which would have been known as normal and everyday by the recipients of Paul's letters at Corinth, and no doubt elsewhere."<sup>20</sup> There is, moreover, evidence of a cult of Sarapis from the third or second century B.C., though the remains of the Sarapea on Acrocorinth mentioned by Pausanias in the mid-second century A.D. have not yet been found.<sup>21</sup>

Returning to 1 Cor 8:10, we can assume that there were some believers at Corinth who considered that not only was food offered to idols to be eaten without scruple, but that accepting invitations to cult banquets was, likewise, an indifferent matter. The matter of attendance is shelved until 1 Corinthians 10 and raised indirectly in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1.<sup>22</sup>

In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul exhorts believers to be on guard in their relationships with one another, to persevere in the life of a believer, to remember what happened to the generation which came out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus. "Remember what happened to those who worshipped idols," Paul urges his readers in v 7. They were overthrown. Their bodies were strewn about the desert. Having warned of the peril of thinking that one is strong and beyond temptation, he cries, "Flee the worship of idols" (v 14). In what context are believers in Corinth likely to be found engaged in this activity? By participation in cult banquets. In such banquets one was brought into partnership with the god whose banquet it was and over which he presided. Yet, Paul argues, eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord Jesus constitutes partnership with him. Loyalty to Christ excludes all other loyalties. The many so-called gods and lords have no further claim on the allegiance of the believer.

But has not Paul agreed earlier that food offered to idols is an indifferent item—that eating it is neither here nor there? In the development of the argument he asserts that what Gentile unbelievers sacrifice to their so-called gods is in fact sacrificed to demons (10:20). Participation in the sacrifice and participation in the meal which follows means participating with demons. It means having fellowship with evil supernatural personalities. One partakes and is a sharer of the table of demons.<sup>23</sup> This is not a matter of indifference. It is to

<sup>19</sup>H. C. Youtie, "The Kline of Sarapis," *HTR* 41 (1948) 9-29 (13-14).

<sup>20</sup>Horsley, *New Documents*, 1.9.

<sup>21</sup>See D. E. Smith, "The Egyptian Cults at Corinth," *HTR* 70.3/4 (1977) 201-31 (217-18), and Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 2:4:6.

<sup>22</sup>For discussion of this passage (2 Cor 6:14-7:1) see G. D. Fee's article, "11 Corinthians and Food Offered to Idols," *NTS* 23 (1977) 140-61 and particularly 145.

<sup>23</sup>W. F. Orr & J. A. Walther, *1 Corinthians*, 255, "This partnership is set up when the food is eaten at a meal where the dedication to the idol is identified," and C. K.

invite the same catastrophe which befell the idolaters of the exodus generation. He makes the same point in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1.<sup>24</sup>

In 1 Cor 10:25 Paul returns to the issue of meat sold in the market. Although such meat may have been ritually slaughtered and offered—not to gods but to demons—the meat can be eaten. As meat, it belongs to God. It is not tainted. It will not harm. However it is the context in which meat offered to idols is eaten that is crucial. Eating in a cult banquet constituted the eater a sharer in the table of a demon.<sup>25</sup> But eating in a private house may be a different matter altogether (10:27). Paul is thinking “of social occasions which can acquire a cultic tendency, but do not have to do so.”<sup>26</sup> If the believer is informed, however, that the meat he is eating is “sacrificial meat”—*ἱερόθυτον*, the polite term is the term used (not “meat offered to an idol”—*εἰδωλόθυτον*)—then it is right not to eat it. This is enjoined on the believer, not because of the meat but because of the conscience of the informant (see 1 Cor 8:10-13; 10:28-29). We assume that he is a weak believer who has had his suspicions concerning the status of the meat confirmed by enquiry. The informant has given the purely social meal the character of a cult banquet. If it were in fact the case that this meal was a cult banquet it would have been obvious to the strong believer that the meat had come from the sacrificial ritual.<sup>27</sup>

To what extent is the Lord's Supper the believer's cult banquet? Though this point will be taken up again in the section on the Mystery Cults, we can say at this juncture with Barrett that Paul “allows a limited degree of analogy between the pagan feasts . . . and the Christian feast.”<sup>28</sup> R. P. Martin cites and dismisses the theory that Paul was “a Hellenist who foisted on the church a sacramental

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Barrett, *I Corinthians*, 237, eating at an idol's table brought one into intimate relationship with evil spiritual powers. For the partnership and companionship of the worshippers with the divinity to whom the sacrifice has been made, see Plato, *Symposium*, 188 B-C. Cf. Plato, *Laws*, 653, and Philo, *Special Laws*, 1:221, as well as Homer (see also n. 14).

<sup>24</sup>However, see G. Theissen, *Social Setting*, 122, 139. He argues that passive participation as a guest at a cult banquet is not specifically outlawed by Paul in 1 Cor 8:7-13. This is a concession to the socially advantaged among the believers. What is excluded in 10:14-22, however, is the reciprocal hosting of such banquets by the strong. That would amount to “idol worship” (139). Theissen's argument is, I feel, unpersuasive.

<sup>25</sup>This is C. K. Barrett's point in “Things Sacrificed to Idols” where he summarizes, “Hence (conscientious scruples permitting) the Christian may freely use *εἰδωλόθυστα* and eat with unbelieving friends, To take part in idolatrous ritual is another matter . . .” (149).

<sup>26</sup>H. Conzelmann, *I Corinthians*, 177. Cf. C. K. Barrett, “Things Sacrificed to Idols,” 147.

<sup>27</sup>C. K. Barrett, *I Corinthians*, 243.

<sup>28</sup>C. K. Barrett, *I Corinthians*, 21.

doctrine which was modelled on the Greek Mystery practice of a meal in honour of a cult deity."<sup>29</sup> The analogy of which Barrett speaks consists in the fact that like the cult meal, the Supper (δεῖπνον) establishes communion/partnership (κοινωνία) with the Lord Christ, though, of course, with one who is rightly Lord and God.

Moreover, Paul speaks of the table (τράπεζα) of the Lord and the table (τράπεζα) of demons. Though *table* was an accepted designation for the sacrificial altar,<sup>30</sup> there is no sense in which the Supper of the Lord is a sacrificial meal. In contrast, the cult banquet was precisely that. The food had been offered to the god (ιερόθυτον, θεόθυτον). The believers' Supper on the other hand *celebrates* a sacrifice—or more exactly—a death (see 1 Cor 5:6–8). It is eaten in memory of Jesus' death and in gratitude for its benefits. Paul never uses the word sacrifice (θυσία) to refer to the supper. It is not eaten in a shrine or a temple before an image, but in a meeting, an ἐκκλησία. It is not eaten by worshipers participating in a cult, but by believers meeting together in one another's homes. That Christian writers came to use sacrificial terminology to refer to the Supper, thus departing from the New Testament understanding, is evident from the middle of the 2nd century A.D.<sup>31</sup>

#### THE BODY IMAGERY

It is quite possible that the body imagery surfaces for the first time in Paul's output in 1 Cor 10:17, 11:29 and more extensively in 12:12–26, and in Rom 12:3–8 as well. What is the origin of this imagery?

E. Best offers an extensive and persuasive treatment of the interpretation and possible origin of the imagery as encountered in the earlier Pauline letters. He concludes that the concept of Christ as

<sup>29</sup>R. P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 121. However, compare H. Lietzmann, *Mass and Lord's Supper* (Leiden: Brill, 1979) 205–6. Lietzmann presses the sacrificial imagery too far in arguing that the Pauline Supper is to be regarded not only as an analogue to Hellenistic meals held as memorials to great men and cult founders, but also is to be thought of as a "sacrificial meal, in the elements of which divine power dwells" (205). He continues, "The symbolic words of Jesus now describe a spiritual reality: the faithful partake of the body of the Lord and become thereby *one* body with him and with one another: the *corpus mysticum* of the church comes into being. The simple table-fellowship of primitive times is now a mystical κοινωνία" (206).

<sup>30</sup>See, e.g., LSJ and inscriptions and papyri cited, Mal 1:12 (LXX), Diodorus Siculus, *Histories*, 5:46:7.

<sup>31</sup>See, e.g., Didache, 14:3; Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 41:3; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4:17:5. See further, J. B. Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry* (London: Macmillan, 1901) 124–35, and E. Ferguson, "Spiritual Sacrifice in Early Christianity and its Environment," ANRW II.23.2 (1980) 1159–89, especially 1166–89.

corporate personality explains the distinctive Pauline use of the imagery as applied to believers in their relationship to Christ.<sup>32</sup>

Recently a fresh suggestion as to the origin of the body imagery has been advanced by A. E. Hill (and supported enthusiastically by G. G. Garnier and J. Murphy-O'Connor).<sup>33</sup> He observes that archaeological excavation has brought to light a number of terra-cotta representations of parts of the body placed in the Temple of Asclepius, the god of healing, as votive offerings. They were expressions of gratitude for the healing of that particular bodily member. Hill believes it quite likely that Paul, wandering about Corinth, inspected the Asclepeum (cf. Acts 17:16, 23), and observed these myriad dismembered parts of the body. Hill concludes that this emphasis on dismembered parts in the Asclepeum may lie behind Paul's exhortation to the believer not to tolerate dismemberment within their congregational life. Murphy-O'Connor similarly believes Paul was influenced by these votive images. The church, he urges, ought not to be like the "dead, divided, unloving and unloved" bodily members in the Asclepeum.<sup>34</sup> From this, he concludes, "it would have been an easy step to the contrasting image of the whole body in which the distinctive identity of each of the members is rooted in a shared life."<sup>35</sup> Hill's suggestion appears attractive particularly in light of the fact that Paul only refers to individual parts of the body in 1 Corinthians among his letters (see 1 Cor 12:12-26). Furthermore, the Corinthians were familiar with the cult of Asclepis. There had been Asclepea in the city since the late fifth century B.C.<sup>36</sup>

However the difficulty with this reconstruction of the origin of the body imagery in 1 Corinthians lies in the fact that the terra-cotta votives which have sparked this interest date from *before* the Roman

<sup>32</sup>See E. Best's chapter, "The Body of Christ: The Earlier Epistles," in his *One Body in Christ* (London: SPCK, 1955) 83-114. See also B. Daines, "Paul's Use of the Analogy of the Body of Christ with Special Reference to 1 Corinthians 12," *EQ* 50 (1978) 71-78. G. D. Fee rather dismisses Best's discussion and conclusions. "The very commonness of the imagery," he asserts, "makes much of that discussion irrelevant," *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 602 n. 11. There is no doubting this "commonness." See, e.g., Aristotle, *Politics*, IV:iii:11; Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 2:3:18-19; Livy, 2:32:9-12; Seneca, *Letters*, 95:52-53.

<sup>33</sup>A. E. Hill, "The Temple of Asclepius: An Alternative Source for Paul's Body Theology?," *JBL* 99 (1980) 437-39. See also G. G. Garnier, "The Temple of Asklepius at Corinth and Paul's Teaching," *Buried History* 18 (1982) 52-58; J. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 165-67, and "The Corinth That St. Paul Saw," *BibArch* 47 (1984) 147-59 (156). G. D. Fee is unconvinced, see *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 602 n. 11.

<sup>34</sup>J. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 167.

<sup>35</sup>J. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 167.

<sup>36</sup>C. Roebuck, *Corinth*, XIV.154; A. E. Hill, "The Temple of Asclepius," 438.



sack of Corinth in 146 B.C.<sup>37</sup> The excavation reports clearly date these to the fourth century B.C.<sup>38</sup> They were found as fill, deposited before later Hellenistic and Roman building programs. Unless there was a continuation of the practice of placing such votives in the Asclepeum after the Roman re-founding of the city—and we have no evidence that this is the case—then we must conclude that Paul's imagery did not have its origin here.

#### THE ATHLETIC IMAGERY OF 9:24-27

The NT letter writers occasionally refer to the life of the believer by the image of the athletic contest (see 2 Tim 2:5, 4:8, cf. Heb 12:1, Jas 1:12, 1 Pet 5:4). Paul sees himself as the athlete in 1 Cor 9:24-27. He does not run aimlessly, he assures his readers. His commitment to gospel preaching and submission to the will of God is earnest. His one aim in persevering is to obtain the prize. For him it is a heavenly prize—as Phil 3:14 indicates—"I press on toward the goal for the prize (τὸ βραβεῖον) of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." The athlete submits himself to pain and suffering—to the regimen of training and self-control (9:25). And the athlete, remarks Paul, receive a perishable wreath (φθαρτὸς στέφανος); we, on the other hand, an imperishable (ἄφθαρτος) one.

All Greeks would have been familiar with this imagery. The Corinthians were host to one of the four panhellenic (athletic) festivals—the Isthmian Games held approximately seven miles distant at the sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia. These had been inaugurated as early as the early sixth century B.C. They were dedicated to the god Poseidon. The games were not only for athletes. Drama, poetry and music also had their place. Like all such occasions, the Isthmian Games were decidedly cultic in nature. Oscar Broneer believes that,

<sup>37</sup>I owe this insight to Mr. John Court, a post-graduate student at Macquarie University, whose study of the excavation reports of C. Roebuck first led him to doubt Hill's thesis. Mr. Court, whose observations are not in print, informs me that in his comprehensive study of the extant votives from Asclep around the Mediterranean, he is not aware of any to be dated later than the end of the first century B.C. He adds (*per litt.*) that this is not to say that Paul had not seen votives to Asclepius in travels. Venerable stone votives were still to be seen in the Asclep at Athens and Epidaurus in the first century A.D.

<sup>38</sup>See C. Roebuck, *Corinth*, XIV.111-38 including Plates 29-56. After dating the material found in the deposits in which the votives have been found, Roebuck concludes his discussion with the observation, "The evidence of the coins, of the lamps, and of the pottery indicates that the accumulation of votives represented in the deposits began in the last quarter of the fifth century and ended in the last quarter of the fourth century B.C., when the precinct and Lerna were rebuilt," 137. The latest datable object found in the deposits is a Theban coin of 315-288 B.C.



since Paul stayed in Corinth for a period of 18 months (Acts 18:11) during Gallio's proconsulship, he would have been present in the spring of A.D. 51 when these biennial games were held.

Murphy-O'Connor speculates that Paul may have attended the games despite their cultic orientation.<sup>39</sup> Though Palestinian Jews had a long tradition of hostility to Gentile festivals,<sup>40</sup> Jews of the Dispersion may have lacked their scruples.<sup>41</sup> Since Paul's trade was that of tent-maker and the visitors and spectators were housed in tents, Paul's attendance, Murphy-O'Connor concludes, would have been likely.

As we have noted above, Paul observes that the runners receive a "perishable crown." It is of some interest that from early times (c. 473 B.C.) the victors at the Isthmian games received a wreath of withered celery, not the fresh celery wreaths granted victors at the Nemean games (held approximately 12 miles southwest of Corinth), thus highlighting more acutely the contrast between the perishable and imperishable crowns which are the goals and prizes of athletes and believers respectively.<sup>42</sup>

#### SACRAL MANUMISSION

In a justly famous section of his work *Light from the Ancient East*,<sup>43</sup> A. Deissmann enthusiastically argues that at the basis of Paul's assertion: "You are not your own; you were bought with a price" (1 Cor 6:19-20), and, "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men" (7:23), lies the practice of sacral manumission, the custom of releasing a slave in the context of the cult. Deissmann cites inscriptions from Delphi and elsewhere in Greece (though not from Corinth) in which the god "buys" a slave from his master, "for freedom."<sup>44</sup> It is clear that the slave has already paid the price of his/her freedom, having deposited the money in the temple treasury from which the master receives his price. The feigned transaction completed, the slave is now free from his former master. "At the utmost," adds Deissmann, "a few pious regulations to his old master

<sup>39</sup>J. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 17.

<sup>40</sup>See 1 Macc 1:14; 2 Macc 4:9, 12-13. See also E. Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, rev. ed., Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979) 54-55.

<sup>41</sup>E.g. Miletus Theatre Inscription. For text and discussion, see A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978 repr.) 451-52, and G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* (Vol 3; North Ryde, NSW: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University, 1983) 54.

<sup>42</sup>O. Broneer, 'Paul and the Pagan Cults at Isthmia', *HTR* 44 (1971) 169-87 (186).

<sup>43</sup>*Light from the Ancient East*, 318-30.

<sup>44</sup>See also C. K. Barrett, *Documents Illustrating the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1956) 52-53.

are imposed on him."<sup>45</sup> The deed of manumission is left in the care of the god. The slave is a completely free man.

With reference to 1 Cor 6:20 ("You were bought with a price"), the price of freedom, says Deissmann, is not that paid by the slave but that paid on his behalf by Christ in his death. But one senses that Deissmann has not fully perceived the implications of the manumission texts and the 1 Corinthians passages. Though for Deissmann, the slave was only fictitiously sold to the divinity, the price paid to which Paul refers results in slavery to Christ. Believers have been bought by Christ in the same way that God bought/ransomed his people from Egypt, delivering them from one bondage into bondage to himself (Exod 6:6-7, 19:5; 1 Pet 2:9). Such bond-service is perfect freedom.

The point being made by Paul in 1 Cor 7:22-23 ("For he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedman of the Lord," and "Likewise he who was free when called is a slave of Christ . . .")<sup>46</sup> is more helpfully explained by Francis Lyall from the standpoint of Roman custom. This custom is particularly appropriate since New Corinth was a Roman foundation.<sup>47</sup> He sees v 22 as reflecting the distinctive Roman attitude of the mutual obligations of freedman and former master. The master, now the patron of the former slave, cared for him should he be needy, sick, or homeless. He could not testify against his former slave. The freedman owed certain reciprocal duties to his patron. Lyall writes,

The free Christian is to consider himself the slave of Christ, subject to the full control and care of his Master. The Christian slave is to consider himself Christ's freedman, a full human being, yet not detached from his patron. Christ has freed him and will perform the duties of a patron towards him, summed up in caring for him. The freedman owes reciprocal duties to Christ to the fullest extent.<sup>48</sup>

Sacral manumission does not illuminate these passages in 1 Corinthians.<sup>49</sup> The insights gained from a study of Roman customs appear far more persuasive.

<sup>45</sup> *Light from the Ancient East*, 322. On the precise nature of the sale to the god, see also S. Scott Bartchy, *First-Century Slavery and 1 Corinthians 7:21* (SBL Dissertation Series 11; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1973) 121-25. Bartchy argues persuasively that sacral manumission took the form of an "entrustment sale," the slave depositing the money with the priests (the god's representatives) as the one who as a non-person at law needed a trusted intermediary in the commercial transaction.

<sup>46</sup> Paraphrase of 1 Cor 7:21-22 in C. K. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 152.

<sup>47</sup> F. Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons: Legal Metaphors in the Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 27-46.

<sup>48</sup> F. Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons*, 44.

<sup>49</sup> See however Gal 5:1, "For freedom Christ has set us free." Cf. C. K. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 171; Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1:19:9; 4:7:16-18.

## DELIVERING TO SATAN (1 COR 5:5)

In chapter 5 Paul confronts the serious immorality of a believer living with his father's wife. Paul counsels, "Let him who has done this be removed from among you" (v 2), adding, in v 5, "You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (RSV).

Many commentators see in vv 2 and 5 allusions to excommunication. This was practiced by the ancient Israelites (see Deut 17:7, 19:19, 21:21, 22:24, 24:7)<sup>50</sup> and by the Jews of the NT era (e.g., John 9:35, 16:2). Robertson and Plummer, commenting on the phrase παραδοῦναι . . . τῷ Σατανᾷ ("to deliver . . . to Satan," v 5), write, "This means solemn expulsion from the Church and relegation of the culprit to the region outside the commonwealth and covenant where Satan holds sway."<sup>51</sup> Suffering and ultimately death, inflicted by Satan, would result, which suffering, however, would have a remedial effect.<sup>52</sup>

Hans Conzelmann, however, highlights the reflection of Paul's injunction in magical incantations. He observes, "(This) shocking idea is to be understood in the first instance within the context of contemporary history: the view of the curse and ban as entertained by the whole ancient and Jewish world."<sup>53</sup> A similar phrase to that which occurs in 5:5 is to be found in a third century A.D. magical papyrus—an incantation for the driving out of a demon—in which the following occurs, "I give you over to black chaos in utter destruction."<sup>54</sup> Deissmann illustrates the verse by citing another magical papyrus which has the words, "Daemon of the dead . . . I deliver unto thee such a man, in order that . . ." (text breaks off).<sup>55</sup> Not surprisingly,

<sup>50</sup>See P. Zaas, "'Cast Out the Evil Man from your Midst' (1 Cor 5:13b)," *JBL* 103 (1984) 259–61.

<sup>51</sup>A. T. Robertson & A. Plummer, *I Corinthians*, 99.

<sup>52</sup>See A. T. Robertson & A. Plummer, *I Corinthians*, 99–100 and C. K. Barrett, *I Corinthians*, 126. This interpretation is supported by the RSV in its rendering of the Greek τὸ πνεῦμα. Adela Yarbro Collins in her article, "The Function of 'Excommunication' in Paul," *HTR* 73 (1980) 251–63, has challenged this by arguing that (1) the injunction must be interpreted "communally and eschatologically" (259), (2) the destruction of the flesh is a reference to the eternal destruction of the transgressor on the Day of the Lord, and (3) Paul was not concerned here about the man's possible repentance. The "spirit" (τὸ πνεῦμα) which must be saved is not the spirit of the man, but the Spirit in the church which must be "untainted by the contagion of impurities in the day of the Lord, by the ejection of the incestuous fornicator" (260).

<sup>53</sup>H. Conzelmann, *I Corinthians*, 97.

<sup>54</sup>*P. Par 574*. Text in G. Milligan, *Selections from the Greek Papyri* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910) 112–14. Lines 1247–48 read, παραδίδωμι σε εἰς τὸ μέλαν χάος ἐν ταῖς ἀπολείαις.

<sup>55</sup>*London Magical Papyrus*, 46.334–35, fourth century A.D. Text in A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 302 n. 5; νεκυδαίμων, . . . παραδίδωμί σοι τὸν δαίμονα, ὅπως . . .

Deissmann concludes his discussion of 1 Cor 5:5 with the words, "the Apostle advises the Corinthian church to perform a solemn act of execration."<sup>56</sup>

But as C. K. Barrett and G. D. Fee properly point out that there is a considerable difference between the Pauline injunction and the magical incantation.<sup>57</sup> In the former the transgressor is not handed over to Satan's complete control. The expectation is that he will be reclaimed if the discipline of excommunication is administered. In the latter, however, the powers of darkness are given complete control over the one into whose power he has been consigned.

#### THE MYSTERY CULTS

There existed in Corinth, as in many Greek πόλεις, so-called mystery cults. These cults, both native and imported from Egypt and Asia, existed alongside the officially sponsored state-cults. At Athens the state actually organized the famous Eleusinian mysteries. Speculation concerning the origin of the mysteries focuses on the possible survival of prehistoric agrarian cultic expressions.<sup>58</sup> In Greece, the mysteries were seen as the particular gift of Demeter the corn-goddess. They were open to men and women alike, to slave and free. Initiation often took the form of lustration.

J. A. Robinson helpfully defines the term "mystery" (μυστήριον) as signifying "a religious rite which it is profanity to reveal."<sup>59</sup> The

<sup>56</sup> *Light from the Ancient East*, 303. Cf. 1 Cor 16:22; εἴ τις οὐ φιλεῖ τὸν κύριον, ἦτω ἀνάθεμα ("If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed"), Gal 1:8, 9 and 1 Tim 1:20. M. Smith goes too far when he argues that Paul (like Jesus) was a magician and that congregational meetings at Corinth were "largely group seances of which the most important elements were the invocation of spirits, the utterances they inspired, and the changes they produced in the personalities of the possessed." See his "Pauline Worship as seen by Pagans," *HTR* 73 (1980) 241-49 (246).

<sup>57</sup> C. K. Barrett, *I Corinthians*, 126; G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 208-13. On the question of what is signified by the term "destruction of the flesh," Fee concludes that Paul is using "destruction" metaphorically, arguing that Paul's anthropology which does not envisage the separation of flesh and spirit (211), and the following purpose clause contain the key to exegesis, "It is especially difficult to see how an expected death can be understood as remedial . . . (210).

<sup>58</sup> See W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 276-78 for discussion. See also R. Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity* (Edinburgh: Fontana Library, 1956) 185-92; S. Freyne, *The World of the New Testament*, New Testament Message #2 (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1980) 35-41, and C. K. Barrett, *Documents*, 91.

<sup>59</sup> J. A. Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1909) 234. See too Herodotus, *Histories*, 2:171; and Plutarch, *On Exile*, 607C. Cf. G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961) 7. S. Angus's treatment in *The Mystery Religions and Christianity* (London: John Murray, 1924) 45-75 remains a valuable and detailed attempt to define the various elements of the mystery cults. D. H. Wiens, "'Mystery' Concepts in Primitive

word comes to mean something secret requiring divine revelation to be made known. This meaning is in line with the common meaning of the word "mystery" in English. Only the initiated had access to the rite(s). In the context of the mystery the initiate had experiences in which great terrors were provoked and dispelled by the rites. "For the 'mystes'" [the initiate], writes Burkert, "death loses its terror."<sup>60</sup> Robert Banks observes that the mysteries "catered for the psychological needs of the people . . . chiefly through various dramatic rituals in which adherents participated and vivid mystical experiences to which they aspired."<sup>61</sup> Such experiences were termed redemptive or salvific.<sup>62</sup> By participating in the cult drama, the worshiper felt himself re-born. It is suggested that he received from the god, who himself had been brought back from the dead, assurance of well-being (σωτηρία) now and in the future, even to the extent of a guarantee of immortality.<sup>63</sup> Apuleius, the second century A.D. Roman writer, describes in the last book of the *Metamorphoses* a procession of initiates of the Isis Mystery witnessed by his hero Lucius at the Corinthian port of Cenchreae. Lucius reveals that at his own initiation soon after,

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Christianity and its Environment," ANRW II.23.2 (1980) 1248-84 is a helpful recent summary of the present state of the debate concerning the possible interface of the Graeco-Roman background and the New Testament.

<sup>60</sup>W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 277.

<sup>61</sup>R. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1980) 20.

<sup>62</sup>"Salvation" (σωτηρία) is apprehended by the initiate. See also R. Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*, 188; R. Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery Religions: Their Basic Ideas and Significance*, Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1978, reprint) 11; S. Angus, *The Mystery Religions*, 137-38.

<sup>63</sup>See, e.g., R. Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery Religions*, 27; E. Lohse, *The New Testament Environment* (London: SCM, 1976) 232-43 (233), and A. J. M. Wedderburn's discussion in "The Soteriology of the Mysteries and Pauline Baptismal Theology," *NovT* XXIX (1987) 53-72. Wedderburn argues that there is no evidence for the initiates' dying and rising with the god, rather it was a case of their hopes of immortality being raised by their participation in the ritual, 56. On the other hand, the Christian has died with Christ (see Rom 6:5, 2 Cor 5:14). Donfried in "The Cults of Thessalonica," 348-49, citing an observation of Ramsey MacMullen (in *Paganism in the Roman Empire* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981] 55), disputes the view that the Mysteries offered worshipers any sure hope of immortality. However, see also the response of W. A. Meeks to MacMullen in *The First Urban Christians*, 241-42 n. 44. Striving for a secure eternal well-being is reflected in the mid-4th century writer Firmicus Maternus (*The Error of the Pagan Religions* 22:1) who reports the following assurance whispered to the initiates in an unspecified mystery cult, θαρρεῖτε μύσται τοῦ θεοῦ σεσωσμένου· ἔσται γὰρ ἡμῖν ἐκ πόνων σωτηρία. Wedderburn argues that the future "we will have (ἔσται) salvation" seems to contrast with the more assured perfect tense of "of the god has been saved" (σεσωσμένου), "The Soteriology of the Mysteries," 60.



I approached the very gates of death and set one foot on Proserpine's threshold, yet was permitted to return, rapt through all the elements. At midnight I saw the sun shining as if it were noon; I entered the presence of the gods of the underworld and the gods of the upperworld, stood near and worshipped them.<sup>64</sup>

Lucius does not reveal the mystery, i.e., the details of the rite. Yet he narrates something of what happened, giving some enigmatic indication, without profaning the mystery. As a result of his initiation, he is a man re-born.

Now in 1 Cor 2:1 Paul says to his readers, "I did not come proclaiming to you the mystery (though see the textual variant, μαρτύριον) of God in lofty words or wisdom." In 2:7 he writes, "We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God," or literally, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery." In 4:1 he writes, "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (see also 13:2, 14:2, 15:51). Paul's use of this term μυστήριον is by no means rare (Eph 1:9, 10; 3:3-6; Col 1:26, 27; 2:2).

Accordingly some scholars have presumed that Paul was the purveyor of a mystery cult—a Christian one. According to J. Reumann, Windisch saw Paul as the arch-mystagogue, the arch-hierophant—the guide of the initiated, the leader in the rites.<sup>65</sup> Reitzenstein was also prepared to assess Paul in this fashion.<sup>66</sup>

But it is clear in 1 Corinthians, and elsewhere in Paul, that he is using the word μυστήριον in a radically different way compared to the way it was used in the ancient world in the cultic context. If Paul has a mystery—a secret—he imparts it, speaking it and disclosing it to all in public. The "mystery" is available in the public arena. It is the once hidden divine plan for the redemption of the world through Christ, a plan which is now made known and declared in the historical facts of the life and death of Jesus, and now disclosed to the world—to Jew and Gentile—in the preaching of the gospel. It is these events which baptism and Lord's Supper commemorate. In them Jesus' redemptive achievement wrought on the behalf of believers was re-presented to the congregation. When one became a believer at

<sup>64</sup> *Metamorphoses* 11:23 (Loeb edition).

<sup>65</sup> See J. Reumann, "'Stewards of God'—Pre-Christian Religious Application of *OIKONOMOS* in Greek," *JBL* 77 (1958) 339-49 (340).

<sup>66</sup> See *Hellenistic Mystery Religions*, 327 and 533-43. Reitzenstein (327) believes that Paul's teaching concerning dying and rising with Christ (see Rom 6:1-14, 2 Cor 5:14) has direct links with the Mysteries in which the worshiper dies and rises with the god in the cult drama. This view has no basis according to A. J. M. Wedderburn (see his "The Soteriology of the Mysteries," 53-57, and the detailed analysis of paucity of the evidence from the various Mysteries in 57-71). Reitzenstein himself provides no classical evidence.



Corinth one did not enter the realm of myth; one was not initiated into some great secret in which there might have been some hope of immortality. Paul speaks confidently about the resurrection of believers in 1 Corinthians 15 as a consequence of the raising of Jesus from death. Moreover, all believers are in possession of the "secret." There are no grades or levels through which the "initiate" must progress,<sup>67</sup> though some at Corinth have displayed by their factionalism a childishness which, as yet, deprived them of maturity. C. K. Barrett observes, "All Christians are potentially perfect or mature in Christ (Col 1:28), though only some are actually what all ought to be."<sup>68</sup> There is no distinction between those initiated. The "deep things" (1 Cor 2:10) of God are available to all in the gospel which focuses on the cross and on God's redemptive work wrought there.

#### GLOSSOLALIA

It has been argued that the phenomena of glossolalia and their interpretation evident among the Corinthian believers find their parallel in the Greek cults; namely, in ecstatic utterance excited by the cult frenzy associated with the mystery cult of Dionysus, and the Greek mantic tradition as represented by the nearby oracle at the shrine of Apollo at Delphi.<sup>69</sup> In a recent article, H. Wayne House seeks not only to demonstrate affinity between glossolalia and these cults but argues that Corinthian believers' excess in regard to "tongues" was a result of believers allowing their background in these cults to influence their theology and conduct in the congregation.<sup>70</sup>

That the worship of Dionysus and Apollo—gods associated in myth—was well known in Corinth has been established by Oscar Broneer.<sup>71</sup> It is conceivable that former devotees of these gods were among the converts in the Corinthian congregations. But what evidence is there that glossolalia was a feature of the cults in question?

<sup>67</sup>See Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, Book 11. Lucius passes from his uninitiated state to worshiper of Isis, to priest of Osiris, and finally to the higher priestly order of the Pastophores.

<sup>68</sup>C. K. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 69.

<sup>69</sup>That the cults explain the Corinthian glossolalic excess is described by Christopher Forbes, "Early Christian Inspired Speech and Hellenistic Popular Religion," *NovT* XXVIII (1986) 257–70 as the "consensus" view. J. Behm, for example, writes that "Paul is aware of a similarity between Hellenism and Christianity in respect of these mystical and ecstatic phenomena," *TDNT* I (1964) 724. See also Forbes' appendix "Works on Early Christian Prophecy and Hellenistic Religion" in his article "Early Christian Inspired Speech and Hellenistic Popular Religion," 269–70.

<sup>70</sup>H. Wayne House, "Tongues and the Mystery Religions of Corinth," *BibSac* 140 (April–June 1983).

<sup>71</sup>See O. Broneer, "Paul and the Pagan Cults at Isthmia," 182.

House assumes that in the ecstatic state the worshipers of Dionysus spoke in tongues and that the entranced μάντις who received oracles from the god at Delphi pronounced them likewise. At Delphi, according to House, a priest/prophet interpreted what she said to the enquirer by translating the oracle into Greek. House, citing the authority of an article in the 1911 edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, adds that even the phrase "to speak in tongues" (γλώσσαις λαλεῖν) frequently used in 1 Corinthians 14 was "borrowed from ordinary speech."<sup>72</sup>

The evidence for cultic glossolalia—both in the Mystery cults and at the oracle at Delphi—is surprisingly flimsy given the strength of the consensus. While it is certainly true that the worshipers of Dionysus did conduct themselves in a frenzy—dancing wildly, tossing their heads, eating raw flesh—the extent of their glossolalia appears to have been the wild cry εὐοῖ<sup>73</sup> and their acclamation of Dionysus by names of Phrygian origin.<sup>74</sup> Their εὐοῖ is an ejaculation, an outburst, a "Yahoo!" There is no demonstrable affinity between the glossolalia encountered in the Corinthian congregations and the frenzied shouting of the bacchantes.

Christopher Forbes has decisively rebutted House's assumption that the mantic pronounced her oracles in "tongues."<sup>75</sup> By a careful investigation of the ancient sources he concludes that while the μάντις was entranced she neither raved nor babbled nor did she deliver her pronouncements in a foreign tongue.<sup>76</sup> What she communicated was in Greek. It required not interpretation by translation but rather was announced by the προφήτης speaking on her behalf.<sup>77</sup> What she said might be obscure—in archaic Greek. She might deliver her oracles in

<sup>72</sup>House, "Tongues and the Mystery Religions of Corinth," 134–50 (139). For further discussion of the origin of the term γλώσσαις λαλεῖν, see R. A. Harrisville, "Speaking in Tongues: A Lexicographical Study," *CBQ* XXXVIII (1976) 35–48, and S. D. Currie, "Speaking in Tongues," *Int* 19 (July 1965) 274–94; R. H. Gundry, "'Ecstatic Utterance' (N.E.B.)?," *JTS* N.S. 17 (1966) 299–307.

<sup>73</sup>For this exclamation, see Euripides, *The Bacchae*, 142; Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 1291–94; Demosthenes, *On the Crown*, 259–60; Diodorus Siculus, *Histories*, 4:3:3.

<sup>74</sup>See Euripides, *The Bacchae*, 158–59.

<sup>75</sup>See C. Forbes, "Early Christian Inspired Speech," especially 260–67.

<sup>76</sup>See Plutarch's definition of divine inspiration as encountered at the Delphic oracle (at which he served as a priest) in *The Oracles at Delphi*, 397C. "The voice is not that of the god, nor the utterance of it, nor the metre, but all these are the woman's; he puts into her mind only the visions, and creates a light in her soul in regard to the future; for inspiration is precisely this" (Loeb tr.).

<sup>77</sup>See C. Forbes, "Early Christian Inspired Speech," and "Prophecy and Inspired Speech" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis; Macquarie University: North Ryde, 1987) chapter 8, "Early Christian Prophecy and its Hellenistic Parallels: Definitions and Terminology," 229–61. In the latter, Forbes writes of the rôle of the προφήτης in the oracular process at Delphi: "Instead of being the interpreter or versifier of the Pythia's

riddles. But she did not speak in "tongues." Nevertheless Forbes discusses an instance (the only instance of which he is aware) where the mantic did reply to the enquirer in a foreign language. The incident is known to Herodotus (fifth century B.C.), Plutarch (first/second century A.D.), and Pausanias (second century A.D.).<sup>78</sup> Having consulted the oracle of Ptoan Apollo near Thebes, Mys, a Carian, received his reply in that language much to the surprise and amazement of accompanying Thebans who clearly expected the reply to be in Greek.

#### STEWARDS, SERVANTS, SUBORDINATES, AND SLAVES OF GOD AND CHRIST

Finally, I want to deal with the following terms: "subordinates of Christ" (1 Cor 4:1); "servants of Christ," (1 Cor 4:1; 2 Cor 11:23); "servants of God" (2 Cor 6:4); "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor 4:1); and "slaves of Christ" (1 Cor 7:22).

The Greek words for "servant," "steward," "subordinate" and "slave" (δῆλονος, οἰκονόμος, ὑπηρέτης and δοῦλος respectively) of themselves do not have cultic significance. The ὑπηρέτης is a subordinate of another. Ὑπηρεῖται are to be found in any subordinate rôle; in domestic service,<sup>79</sup> as minor public officials witnessing and copying documents,<sup>80</sup> or as executors of the orders of a court or monarch. The οἰκονόμος can denote a steward,<sup>81</sup> or an administrator

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ravings, he [the προφήτης] was merely an official spokesman, with little or no direct role in the oracular process itself" (234). In the former Forbes argues that elsewhere it appears that the προφήτης was the priest-supervisor of the oracular session, 264. See also D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 30–34. Plato makes abundantly clear that there was a difference between the inspired μάντις and the προφήτης. While the former receives oracles while in a "state of frenzy" (μανέντος) the latter imparts the oracle in his "rational mind" (ἐννοῦς), *Timaeus*, 71E–72A. Cf. *TDNT* 6 (1968) 781–96 both for a general discussion of the phenomenon of prophecy in the Graeco-Roman world, and 787–88 for an analysis of the difference in function in which the μάντις and the προφήτης were engaged. At Delphi, the terms προφήτης and μάντις could describe the same person but not the same function. In contrast to the Graeco-Roman environment where it was the μάντις who was inspired and not the προφήτης, Luke and Paul perceive that the Christian prophet is inspired. Forbes writes that Christian prophecy "is the reception and subsequent public declaration of (usually) verbal revelation. Such revelation is normally spontaneous (we have no examples of it happening in response to enquiries) and the subsequent declaration is normally immediate," "Prophecy and Inspired Speech" (276).

<sup>78</sup>See Herodotus, *Histories*, 8:135; Plutarch, *On the Obsolescence of Oracles*, 412A; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 9:23:6; and discussion in C. Forbes, "Prophecy and Inspired Speech," 140–41.

<sup>79</sup>See Herodotus, *Histories*, 3:63; and Plato, *The Statesman*, 289C.

<sup>80</sup>See *P. Tebt* 850.54 (170 B.C.), and 866.57 (237 B.C.); *P. Oxy* 260.19, 20 (A.D. 59), and *P. Fay* 26.20 (A.D. 150).

<sup>81</sup>See LSJ and passages cited there.

in the public service or of a private estate.<sup>82</sup> Paul's Letter to the Romans was, in all probability, written from Corinth.<sup>83</sup> In 16:23 we read of one Erastus (see also 2 Tim 4:20 and Acts 19:22 for an associate of Paul of the same name) who is an οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως who sends greetings to the Roman believers. There was an Erastus who, before the mid first century A.D., held the Roman municipal office of aedile (commissioner of public works) at Corinth. He laid a pavement at his own expense in return for the aedileship.<sup>84</sup> The διάκονος was a link-man; a courier, or a waiter. The δοῦλος was, of course, a slave.

These four terms are found in the context of the Gentile cults. We meet the "subordinate" (ὕπηρετης) in such a sphere in Dio Chrysostom, Diodorus Siculus, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus.<sup>85</sup> The "steward" is also a term found in the cults as Reumann summarizes, "Private societies of a religious nature employ the title οἰκονόμος for their stewards, and in the Sarapis and Hermes Trismegistus cults clear examples appear."<sup>86</sup> The διάκονος Θεοῦ ("servant of God") is a waiter or server in the temple. The term is used of a college of δῖακονοι presided over by a priest.<sup>87</sup> The cults also testify to "slaves" of the god—attendants engaged in the precinct in menial tasks.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>82</sup>See Aristotle, *Politics*, 1314b7; Luke 12:42; *P. Tebt* 402.1 (A.D. 172).

<sup>83</sup>See C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, Vol. I (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975) 12-16.

<sup>84</sup>See J. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 37; H. J. Cadbury, "Erastus of Corinth," *JBL* L (1931) 42-58; and G. Theissen, *Social Setting*, 75-83. Theissen believes that it is more likely that the Erastus of Rom 16:23 was in fact a quaestor (treasurer) in Corinth in the year that Paul wrote Romans. The usual Greek term for the Roman office of aedile is ἀγορανόμος. While the word for quaestor is ταμίας, it is not attested for this period. Theissen argues that Erastus held the office of οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως prior to the more privileged office of aedile—an office held for one year only. "It would have been mere chance were Erastus aedile in precisely that year when Paul wrote to the Romans while in Corinth," 81. See further W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 58-59.

<sup>85</sup>Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 36:33; Diodorus Siculus, *Histories*, 1:73:3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 2:73:2.

<sup>86</sup>J. Reumann, "Stewards of God," 349.

<sup>87</sup>*CIG* II, 1800:1. On the question of the term διάκονος in general see J. Collins, "Diakonia as an Authoritative Capacity in Sacred Affairs and as the Model of Ministry," *Compass Theological Review* 18 (1984) 29-34.

<sup>88</sup>See the papyri and inscriptions cited by MM. Strabo mentions ιερόδουλοι employed as prostitutes in temples in his *Geography*, 6:2:6 and 11:4:7. In 8:6:20, Strabo populates the pre-146 B.C. temple of Aphrodite in Corinth with 1,000 such ιερόδουλοι. See also *P. Tebt*. (6.25 (40-39 B.C.) and *P. Oxy.* 50 (100 A.D.) where there is reference to the practice of manumission by "hierodulismus," in which "the slave paid a sum of money and became by a legal fiction the nominal property of a temple but in reality free," E. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Part I (London: Egypt

Although Paul uses these four titles and the cultic terminology: such as "servants of God"; "stewards of the mysteries of God"—there is no Christian cult in Corinth. The ὑπηρέται of Christ are preachers—Apollōs and Paul. The διάκονοι of God/Christ, likewise, are purveyors of the gospel in the same passage (1 Cor 4:1) and in 2 Cor 6:4 and 11:23. The "stewards of the mysteries" are, once again, preachers. The "slave" of Christ is the believer (1 Cor 7:22). The "slave" of Christ does not render a specific cultic obligation but expresses, in his life as a whole, the fact that having been bought with a price (6:20, 7:23) he is under obligation not to live an immoral life (6:18). He is to glorify God in his body (6:20).<sup>89</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

At a number of points in the argument of 1 Corinthians Paul deals with issues in which the Gentile cultic heritage of the believers conflicts with the commitment of believers to Christ. Eating meat offered to idols and participating in temple banquets are the two most significant of these. Scholars have nominated other matters raised in the Letter which, in their opinion, are illuminated by reference to the cults. These are the origin of the "body" metaphor in chapter 12 in Paul's consideration of the disembodied body parts which might have been on view in the Asclepeum, the practice of sacral manumission, the execration by magical incantation of the offender in chapter 5, and the presence of glossolalia in the congregations as an import from the cults and Mysteries. We have concluded that the drawing of cultic analogies in these instances is precipitate. The athletic imagery in 9:24–27 is a possible case of Paul using local color to make his point. Finally, we have emphasized that though Paul may use terminology which, in the case of μυστήριον, echoes the cults, and in the case of the servant/steward of God/Christ designations, imitates them, one cannot assume that Paul saw the believers as engaged in a Christian cult as worshipers. The contrast between the worshiper in the cults—both state and Mystery—and the believer who, on the basis of the divine redemptive work in history, relates to God in the sphere of interpersonal relationships as preacher and believer is studied and deliberate.

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Exploration Fund, 1898) 108. This is most improbable. See J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Corinth*, 55–57 for discussion.

<sup>89</sup>For a discussion of the terminology of serving God, see M. Harding, "The Terminology of Respecting & Serving God in the New Testament Era" (unpublished M. A. thesis, Macquarie University: North Ryde, NSW, 1987).





# NOUN CLAUSES IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT: A STATISTICAL STUDY

JAMES L. BOYER

*This second in a series of studies dealing with subordinate clauses in the Greek NT will look at noun clauses which are introduced by conjunctions. They will be classified as to the function they fill in the sentence and statistical counts will be given for each group. The structure of the noun clauses will be explored, summarizing the conjunctions used and the moods employed with each. Alternative forms of noun clauses will be examined.*

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## INTRODUCTION

SUBORDINATE clauses in the Greek NT structurally are of two main groups, those introduced by relative words and those introduced by conjunctions. We have previously looked at the relative clauses<sup>1</sup> and found that 473 or 28% of them functioned as noun clauses. In this article we begin our study of clauses introduced by subordinating conjunctions. Of these, 1220 function as noun clauses, the largest category of all the subordinate clauses.

Several designations are used for this type of clause. Simplest is the term "Noun Clause", the one that will be used in this paper. It indicates a clause which functions in the sentence as a noun, and can be used almost anywhere a noun can; usually as subject or object of the verb. Other designations are "Nominal" or "Substantival", with no distinction in meaning.

## CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO NOUN FUNCTION

This classification of noun clauses is based on what functional part of the sentence is filled by the clause. Noun clauses are used in

<sup>1</sup>See my article, "Relative Clauses in the Greek New Testament: A Statistical Study" *GTJ* 9 (1988) 233-56.

three primary ways; they are either subject, or object, or epexegetic, with sub-classifications based on the structure of each. It should be noted that in this matter they conform to a pattern similar to that found in the use of the verbal noun-substitute, the infinitive.<sup>2</sup>

### *Noun Clause as Subject of Sentence*

In these sentences the clausal subject always stands after the verb in Greek, as it usually does also in English, except that there is in Greek no equivalent to the English "it" which stands before as a sign of the delayed subject. This English structure is a most natural one to translate these Greek sentences. Example: 1 Cor 4:3 ἐμοὶ δὲ εἰς ἐλάχιστόν ἐστιν, ἵνα ὑφ' ὑμῶν ἀνακριθῶ, "But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you."

### *Subject of Copulative Verb, Εἰμί*

A relatively small number of these are found. Sometimes the verb is expressed (6 examples), more commonly it is left to be supplied (14 times). In two instances<sup>3</sup> the clause seems to function as subjective complement rather than subject, but it is difficult to tell which is which.

Few as they are, a couple patterns appear. In seven instances<sup>4</sup> the sentence opens with οὐκ ὅτι without a verb, and the sense seems to be a dis-avowal of something: "It is not that," "I do not mean that," "The situation is not such that."

Another recurring pattern involves the predicate adjective δῆλον, with the verb ἐστίν to be supplied. Twice δῆλον is expressed,<sup>5</sup> once it is found in the variant readings.<sup>6</sup> In another passage, to assume that δῆλον ἐστίν should be supplied furnishes, in the judgement of some commentators<sup>7</sup> and of the present writer, a preferable explanation to a very difficult problem of interpretation.

<sup>2</sup>See my article, "Classification of Infinitives: A Statistical Study" *GTJ* 6 (1985) 4-6.

<sup>3</sup>John 4:34; 2 Cor 11:10. Lists of all these classifications, together with much other coded information, has been placed in a Supplemental Manual of Information. It is available to those interested through their local library by interlibrary loan from the Morgan Library, Grace Theological Seminary, 200 Seminary Dr., Winona Lake, IN 46590. Similar manuals are available for the other grammatical studies published in this journal by the same author.

<sup>4</sup>John 7:22; 2 Cor 1:24; 3:5; Phil 3:12; 4:11, 17; 2 Thess 3:9. The NASB in the first and last of these translates "because", elsewhere they use simply, "Not that . . .".

<sup>5</sup>1 Cor 15:27; Gal 3:11.

<sup>6</sup>1 Tim 6:7. Cf. the critical apparatus.

<sup>7</sup>1 John 3:20. Cf. Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894) 477-80.

## Subject of Impersonal Verbs

Only eight instances occur.<sup>8</sup> Example: John 11.50 συμφέρει ὑμῖν ἵνα εἷς ἄνθρωπος ἀποθάνῃ ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ, "it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people."<sup>9</sup> Again, the noun clause takes the place of the impersonal "it" used in English with such verbs, except that it stands after the verb. In five of these the verb is one which elsewhere uses an infinitive subject.

## Subject of Passive Verbs

There are 37 of these. In every case the clause would be the object of the verb if it were in the active voice, but becomes subject in the passive transform. Interestingly, in 21 instances the clause is a direct or indirect quotation from OT scriptures; 18 of them using γέγραπται, "it is written that . . ." An example not involving the quoting of scripture is Mark 2:1: ἠκούσθη ὅτι ἐν οἴκῳ ἐστίν. "It was heard that he was at home."

## *Noun Clause as Object of Verbs*

Again the use of a clause as a substitute for a noun parallels the use of the infinitive, with the same type of verbs and many of the same individual verbs showing both constructions. Our classification of the object clauses will therefore parallel our classification of object infinitives.

## Object of Verbs Taking an Objective Complement

Many verbs are of such a nature that they take another verbal idea to complete their meaning. Such verbs I have dealt with at length in another place<sup>10</sup> and will only briefly touch them here. They commonly use an infinitive as complement, but there are 42 examples in the NT where a noun clause serves as complement. Example: 1 Cor 14:1 ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ πνευματικὰ, μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε. "yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy."

These verbs include those expressing (1) wish or desire (θέλω\* has a noun clause complement 8 times with the verb expressed, 3 times where it is understood from the context); (2) an activity to the end that something may or may not be done (βουλεύω\*, συμβουλεύω\*, συμβούλιον λαβεῖν, συμβούλιον διδόναι 7, ποιέω 7\*, ἐτοιμάζω 3, ἀγγαρεύω 2, and βάλλω, διατίθεμαι, τίθημι, ζηλόω\*, ζητέω\*, one

<sup>8</sup>Matt 5:29, 30; 18:6; Mark 4:38; Luke 10:40; 17:2; John 11:50; 16:7.

<sup>9</sup>Unless otherwise stated, NT translations will be given from NASB.

<sup>10</sup>See my article, "Infinitives" *GTJ* 6, 7.

each); (3) to permit, allow (ἀφίημι\*, δίδωμι one each); (4) ability, sufficiency (ἀρκέω, ἔχω\*, εὐρίσκω, one each); (5) need or obligation (δίδωμι\* one); and (6) emotion (ἀγαλλιάω, one<sup>11</sup>). Those marked with an asterisk (\*) are used elsewhere in the NT with the objective complement supplied by an infinitive. It is significant that the NASB uses an infinitive to translate 22 of these 42 noun clauses in the NT.

### Object in Direct Discourse

Direct discourse usually stands as a complete unit without needing to be introduced by a subordinate conjunction, therefore the majority of them lie outside the scope of this study. However, in the Greek NT there is a tendency to introduce direct discourse by using the same conjunction as is used for indirect, ὅτι. This ὅτι *recitativum* as it is called by grammarians<sup>12</sup> cannot be translated and is the equivalent of our English quotation mark. The category is included to call attention to this phenomenon. There are 171 instances so designated, although there is sometimes ambiguity as to whether such a quote is direct or indirect. An example of this ambiguity is Mark 3:21: ἔλεγον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη "for they were saying, 'He has lost his senses.'" It could be understood, "they were saying that he had lost his senses."

### Object in Indirect Discourse

By far the largest category of noun clauses is their use in indirect discourse, 750 instances. The clause stands as object of a verb of mental perception or communication and expresses the content or substance of the thought or of the communication. Again, the classification of this group is patterned after that used with infinitives in indirect discourse.<sup>13</sup>

*Verbs of Recognizing, Knowing, Understanding.* This sub-class alone accounts for almost half (372) of the whole group. Example: 1 John 5.2 ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ. "By this we know that we love the children of God."

The verbs involved, with the number of occurrences and in the order of frequency, are: οἶδα 156\* (+ one where it is to be understood), γινώσκω 60\*, ἀκούω 3, εἶδον 28, ἐπιγινώσκω 14, βλέπω 7, ἐπίσταμαι 7, ἀγνοέω 6, μὴνῆσκω 6, μνημονεύω 6\*, θεωρέω 6\*, ἀναγινώσκω 5, νοέω 3\*, θεάομαι 3, φανερόω 2, καταλαμβάνω 2\*,

<sup>11</sup>Perhaps this should be listed under verbs of wishing and desiring, cf. F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. by Robert Funk (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1961) 199.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. BDF, *Grammar* 205, 246-47.

<sup>13</sup>See my article "Infinitives" *GTJ* 7-9.

and once each ἐπέχω, ἐξομολογέω, γεύομαι, γνωρίζω, γινῶσθαι εἶναι, γράφω, ὁράω, παραλαμβάνω, προεῖδον, προγινώσκω, πυνθάνομαι, σφραγίζω, σύμφημι, συνίημι, ὑπομιμνήσκω. Those marked with the asterisk (\*) also use the infinitive of indirect discourse, but the noun clause seems to be preferred with this category of verbs.

*Verbs of Thinking, Believing, Feeling, Deciding.* 102 noun clauses belong to this group. Example: Gal 1:6 Θαυμάζω ὅτι οὕτως ταχέως μετατίθεσθε ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς . . . "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who . . ."

Verbs using this construction are πιστεύω 25\*, δοκέω 15\* (once where it is to be understood), πείθω 12\*, μεριμνάω 5, διαλογίζομαι 4, λογίζομαι 4\*, νομίζω 4\*, θαυμάζω 4, ζητέω 4, ἔχω 3\*, μιμνήσκω 3, συνίημι 2, and once each, ἀγαλλιάω, ἀναμιμνήσκω\*, βουλεύω, χαίρω, εἶπον, ἐμβλέπω, καταμανθάνω, κατανοέω, κρίνω, μνημονεύω, οἶμαι\*, πληροφορέω, συλλαλέω, συμβιβάζω, συντίθεμαι, ὑπολαμβάνω. The infinitive is common with these verbs.

*Verbs of Hoping, Expecting.* There are only six examples in this category, all involving the same verb, ἐλπίζω. Example: Luke 24:21 ἡμεῖς δὲ ἠελπίζομεν ὅτι αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ μέλλων λυτροῦσθαι τὸν Ἰσραὴλ. "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel." This verb also uses the infinitive.

*Verbs of Indirect Statement.* The three previous classes involved mental activity; the three following involve the communication of that mental activity. The first group expresses a simple statement of the content of that activity; in direct discourse it would be a declarative sentence. Example: John 5:36 . . . μαρτυρεῖ περὶ ἐμοῦ ὅτι ὁ πατήρ με ἀπέσταλκεν. " . . . bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me." The idiomatic expression used by Jesus, λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι, "for I say to you" and ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι, "truly I say to you" accounts for 32 of the total 164 so classified.

The verbs used are verbs of saying, speaking, reporting, witnessing, etc.; λέγω 58, εἶπον 24, μαρτυρέω 12, εὐχαριστέω 7, ἀπαγγέλλω 6\*, διηγέομαι 5, ὁμολογέω 5\*, μαρτύρομαι 4\*, προλέγω 4, γράφω 3, ἀναγγέλλω 2, ἀποκρίνομαι 2\*, διδάσκω 2, ἐμφανίζω 2, ἐξηγέομαι 2, λαλέω 2, παρατίθημι 2, once each ἀνασεύω, ἀποδείκνυμι, ἀρνέομαι, δείκνυμι, διαμαρτύρομαι, εὐαγγελίζω, γνωρίζω, κατηχέω, κηρύσσω, μηνύω, ὁμνύω\*, προεῖπον, προφητεύω, συμβιβάζω, συμμαρτυρέω. The verb is left to be supplied, the context pointing to φημί (3 times), εἶπον once, and three times it is uncertain.

*Verbs of Indirect Question.* Of those clauses introduced by conjunctions identified in the GRAMCORD schedule as SN (Subordinating Nominal) I found no example where the indirect quote would have been a question in the direct. However there is another

group of conjunctions labelled by GRAMCORD as SG (Subordinating Interrogative) which also produce noun clauses. When this group is included there are at least 14 examples of indirect quotations which would have been questions if quoted directly.

Verbs introducing these questions are: ἐπερωτάω 5\*, and one each δέομαι\*, εἶπον, ἐρωτάω\*, λέγω\*, προσδέχομαι, πυνθάνομαι, θαυμάζω.

*Verbs of Indirect Command or Entreaty* In these the noun clause expresses the content of the command or request. In direct discourse they would probably be in the imperative mood. Here they become potential clauses, usually with ἵνα or ὅπως and the subjunctive mood. They are appeals to the will. Example of a command: Mark 7:36 διεστείλατο αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν "He gave them orders not to tell anyone." Example of an entreaty: John 17:15 οὐκ ἐρωτῶ ἵνα ἄρῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἀλλ' ἵνα τηρήσῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ. "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one."

Arbitrarily I have divided them into two groups, commands and entreaties. The basis for the division is two-fold: (1) the meaning of the verb used to introduce them; verbs speaking of commanding introduce commands, verbs speaking of asking, pleading, etc., introduce entreaties; (2) where this distinction is not explicit the context is made to decide. Obviously there are instances of uncertainty.

Verbs of commanding followed by noun object clauses are: εἶπον 6\*, ἐπιτιμάω 6, διαστέλλω 4, λέγω 3\*, βλέπω 3, γράφω 2\*, and one each, ἀκούω, ἀπαγγέλλω, διαμαρτύρομαι\*, ἐντέλλομαι\*, ἐξορκίζω, κηρύσσω\*, λαβεῖν ἐντολήν, παιδεύω\*, παραγγέλλω, ὑποδείκνυμι, and two instances where the verb is not expressed; The total is 35.

Verbs of entreaty found with this construction are: παρακαλέω 20\*, ἐρωτάω 14\*, προσεύχομαι 10\* (+ 3 where it is probably to be supplied), δέομαι 6, κάμπτω τὰ γόνατα 3, αἰτέω 1\*, and another where the word to be supplied is uncertain; total, 57.

### Object of Verbs of Fearing, Apprehension

After some verbs which express fear or warning the cause of the apprehension is expressed by a noun clause. Example: Matt 24:4 βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ "See to it that no one misleads you." 31 instances are so classified. They involve the verbs, βλέπω 11, φοβέω 10, ἐπισκοπέω 3, ὁράω 2, σκοπέω 2, προσέχω 1; twice the verb is left to be understood.

### Object of Other Verbs

Three noun clauses involving the verb ἔχω have been grouped simply as direct object of that verb. In each case a simple noun object



could easily be substituted for the noun clause. For example: Luke 9:58 ὁ δὲ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἔχει ποῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν κλίνει. "The Son of Man has nowhere [i.e., no place] to lay His head." This of course sacrifices the dramatic force of the indirect interrogative ποῦ, which points to some such meaning as "He does not have a place where an answer can be found to the question, 'Where shall I lay my head?'" The other two are similar (Matt 8:20; Luke 12:17).

*Noun Clause as Epexegetic of or in Apposition to Another Substantive*

To a noun

Very often the noun clause stands as an explanation of or in apposition to a noun, 70 instances. Example: Matt 18:14 οὕτως οὐκ ἔστιν θέλημα ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς ἵνα ἀπόληται ἐν τῶν μικρῶν τούτων. "Thus it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish." A great variety of nouns (37 by count) have such amplifying clauses. 13 of them also are used with an epexegetic infinitive, and six more are cognate with words which use this infinitive.

To an adjective

This construction is less common with adjectives, only 10 instances. Example: John 1:27 οὐ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ἄξιος ἵνα λύσω αὐτοῦ τὸν ἱμάντα τοῦ ὑποδήματος. "the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." Again four of the ten also use an epexegetic infinitive.

To a pronoun

Most frequently the noun clause stands in apposition to a pronoun, usually a demonstrative (59 times), sometimes a relative (9 times) or an interrogative (8 times). But since a pronoun refers back to an antecedent, it follows that the appositional clause also represents the antecedent noun. Thus these clauses in effect have a double identity; in structure they stand in explanation of or in apposition to the pronoun, in function they represent that part of the sentence occupied by the antecedent.

In this secondary sense these clauses function like the various classes of noun clauses already described. Some (18) are explanatory of a noun present in the sentence. Example: John 15:12 Αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ ἥ ἐμή, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους, "This is My commandment, that you love one another." Sometimes the antecedent of the pronoun is left to be supplied from the context. Example: Luke 1:43 πόθεν μοι τοῦτο ἵνα ἔλθῃ ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου πρὸς ἐμέ; "how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (the antecedent of τοῦτο is left to be supplied—"this event", "this that

is happening"; the noun clause supplies a description of what that event was). In five instances the demonstrative is in a phrase which by context expresses purpose and the noun clause states the content of that purpose. Example: Col 4:8 *ὃν ἔπεμψα πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ἵνα γνῶτε τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν καὶ . . .* "For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and . . ." By these secondary identifications, there are 6 instances where these clauses might be considered also as subject of the copulative verb.

The same verbs which we have already seen may take a noun clause as object may also use an intervening pronoun, the pronoun being the object and the noun clause in apposition to it explaining its content. Example: Rom 6:6 *τοῦτο γινώσκοντες ὅτι ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος συνεσταυρώθη . . .*, "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him . . ." 29 of them are with verbs taking indirect discourse, and one with a verb of fearing.<sup>14</sup>

Noun clauses in apposition with relative and interrogative pronouns show a similar doubling of the construction. Example: 1 Cor 11:23 *Ἐγὼ γὰρ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου, ὃ καὶ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς . . .* "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus . . ." The noun clause is explanatory of the relative clause introduced by *ὃ* which is the object of the verb *παρέλαβον*, but it also gives the content of that which was delivered; there are not two objects of the verb, but one. It is described by two statements, the relative clause identifies it and the noun clause gives its contents.

Another recurring pattern is the expression *τί ὅτι*;<sup>15</sup> The interrogative pronoun *τί* introduces a question and the noun clause with *ὅτι* states what the question consists of. The expression is much compressed; the antecedent of *τί* must be supplied by the sense of the context, also the verb *ἔστιν* is probably to be understood. The full statement would probably be "For what reason is it that . . . ?" or "Why is it that . . . ?" or simply "Why . . . ?"

#### CLAUSE STRUCTURE

The conjunctions used in noun clauses and the mood of the verbs appearing in them is considered next. Remember that we are not in this study dealing with all noun clauses, but only those introduced by conjunctions. There are 1220 of these in the NT.

<sup>14</sup>In indirect discourse, with verbs of knowing: Matt 24:43; Luke 10:11; 12:39; Rom 6:6; Eph 5:5; 1 Tim 1:9; 2 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 2 Pet 1:20; 1 John 3:16, 19; with verbs of thinking: Mark 4:41; Luke 10:20 (twice); John 16:19; 1 Cor 7:26; 2 Cor 5:14; 10:7, 11; Phil 1:6; 2 Pet 3:3; 5, 8; with verbs of saying: 1 Cor 1:12; 15:50; 1 Thess 4:15; with verbs of commanding and entreaty: John 15:17; Phil 1:9; with verbs of fearing: 2 Cor 8:20.

<sup>15</sup>Luke 2:49; John 14:22; Acts 5:4, 9; Phil 1:18; Heb 2:6 (twice).

*"Οτι With Noun Clauses (855)*

The most frequently used conjunction with noun clauses is *οτι*. Such clauses are found as subject, as object, and as epexegetic, and in almost every sub-classification of these outlined in the preceding part of this article.

*"Οτι Introducing Direct Discourse*

This group has been described above. The direct discourse is a subordinate clause within the main sentence. The *οτι* actually is not needed and most often is not used. When it is used it serves to introduce a noun clause which consists of the direct discourse. It is different, however, from other *οτι* clauses, in that the *οτι* does not govern the verb of the clause. The direct discourse has its own verb relationships; it can be in any mood, and the *οτι* has no effect whatever on it. 20% or 168 of the 855 occurrences of the conjunction *οτι* in noun clauses belong here.

*"Οτι with the Indicative Mood*

*"Οτι* almost always governs a verb in the indicative mood. Of the remaining 687 places where *οτι* introduces a noun clause there are only three exceptions<sup>16</sup> and even these are only apparent exceptions, not real (see next paragraph). There are 34 places where the *οτι* clause has no verb expressed, it is left to be supplied from the sense or the context. In each instance the verb supplied would be indicative.

*"Οτι with the Subjunctive Mood*

There are three instances where the verb is subjunctive in a clause introduced by *οτι*.<sup>17</sup> Each of these is an example of the "emphatic negation" construction, *οὐ μή* with the subjunctive,<sup>18</sup> a construction which can stand anywhere an indicative can and is the equivalent of an indicative.

*"Ινα With Noun Clauses (194)*

Second in order of frequency of noun clauses are those introduced by *ινα*. Again they are included in almost all of the classes already discussed, though not as widely as *οτι*. When *ινα* is found in

<sup>16</sup>While this statement is dealing with *οτι* in noun clauses, it also is true with causal clauses (*οτι* = *because*), the subject of a later study.

<sup>17</sup>Matt 5:20; John 11:56; 1 Thess 4:15.

<sup>18</sup>For a discussion of this construction, its meaning and its structure, see my article, "The Classification of Subjunctives: A Statistical Study" *GTJ* 7 (1986) 6.

a noun clause it of course is not to be translated "in order that" (its most familiar translation as a final clause), but rather, simply "that", or frequently by an infinitive.

### "Ινα with the Subjunctive Mood

The normal mood in a ἵνα clause is subjunctive and the noun clauses with ἵνα follow that rule, 187 times out of 194 or 96%.

### "Ινα with the Future Indicative

The ambivalence between future indicative and aorist subjunctive has been examined in considerable detail elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> All examples of ἵνα with the indicative in noun clauses are futures, and interestingly all are in the book of Revelation, a book which displays a great variety of unusual grammatical features. If, as we have attempted to demonstrate in the earlier study, there is no distinction in meaning between the two constructions, then these seven future indicatives with ἵνα are simply variant forms of the subjunctive.

### Πῶς *With Noun Clauses* (37)

#### Πῶς with the Indicative Mood

Πῶς in noun clauses is almost limited to indirect discourse after verbs of knowing, thinking, saying, etc. Since πῶς is an interrogative the original which is being stated indirectly is always a question, asking "How?" It normally uses the indicative mood, and 26 of the 37 NT examples are indicative.

#### Πῶς with the Subjunctive Mood

In 11 instances πῶς is followed by a subjunctive verb. The reason is quickly obvious; in every case the question being indirectly quoted was originally a deliberative question, already a subjunctive.

### Μή and Μήποτε *With Noun Clauses* (34)

In final clauses μή often represents ἵνα μή, the negative of ἵνα, but in noun clauses there is no ἵνα μή. The conjunctions μή and μήποτε are most commonly (31 out of 34) found introducing the object of a verb expressing fear, warning, or apprehension, in the sense "lest, that not," with the indefinite ποτέ adding a sense of uncertainty, "lest perhaps." One of the other three (2 Cor 8:20) also secondarily belongs to the same category, although structurally it is

<sup>19</sup>See my article, "Subjunctives" *GTJ* 7 (1986) 16-19.

listed as epexegetic of a pronoun that stands as the object of such a verb.

The other two (Luke 3:15; 2 Tim 2:25) are objects in indirect discourse where the direct would be a question.

Μή, μήποτε with the subjunctive mood

The normal mood expected would be subjunctive as indicated by the potential quality of the construction; the count is 25, plus 3 where the verb is unexpressed and presumably would have been subjunctive.

Μή, μήποτε with the indicative mood

Three of the five indicatives are future and should be considered as equal to a subjunctive. Two are seemingly irregular or unusual and we look for some reason. Perhaps they are representing something actual rather than potential. Luke 11:35, σκόπει οὖν μή τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐν σοὶ σκότος ἔστί. "Then watch out that the light in you may not be darkness." may by the indicative be implying that, in the case under consideration (namely, that the eye is bad), the light in them is actually darkness. In Gal 4:11, φοβοῦμαι ὑμᾶς μή πως εἰκῇ κεκοπί-ακα εἰς ὑμᾶς, "I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain," certainly the apprehension has to do, not with what might happen, but what already has happened.

Μήποτε with the optative mood

Luke 3:15 is the only example: καὶ διαλογιζομένων πάντων ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν περὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου, μήποτε αὐτὸς εἴη ὁ χριστός, "and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he might be the Christ." Again, the verb would already have been optative in the direct question and normally retains its mood when quoted indirectly.

Εἰ *With Noun Clauses* (33)

Εἰ with the Indicative Mood

Like πῶς, εἰ is an interrogative word. When it introduces a noun clause that clause is always an original question now being quoted. In at least two instances<sup>20</sup> there is doubt whether they should be considered as direct or indirect quotations; NASB translates them as direct quotes, with quotation marks. If they are direct then the conjunction εἰ is functioning like the ὅτι *recitativum*. If they are

<sup>20</sup> Acts 7:1; 19:2.

indirect the εἰ becomes “whether,” or even “if” since English permits the word “if” to be used sometimes in that sense.

Almost always the mood in the noun clause is indicative, 30 times.

### Εἰ with the Subjunctive Mood

One example shows a subjunctive verb, Phil 3:12: διώκω δὲ εἰ καὶ καταλάβω . . . “if I may even lay hold . . .” (NASB margin). This admittedly is a difficult sentence to translate, but it seems clear that the question being indirectly quoted was originally a deliberative question (note the first person), thus the subjunctive simply carries through to the quote.

### Εἰ with the Optative Mood

Two passages have optative verbs after εἰ in indirect questions, Acts 17:11 and 25:20.<sup>21</sup> The potential quality is clear in both passages and the optative should be considered as belonging to the original question, not to the conjunction εἰ.

### Ποῦ *With Noun Clauses* (18)

#### Ποῦ with the Indicative Mood

Ποῦ is another interrogative word pointing to an original question being indirectly quoted. When it represents a simple question the mood is indicative, 13 times.

#### Ποῦ with the Subjunctive Mood

The three examples all involve the verb ἔχω in a very compressed statement; Matt 8:20 (cf. also Luke 9:58; 12:17) ὁ δὲ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἔχει ποῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν κλίνειν. “The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” The original question was “Where shall I lay my head?”—a deliberative question expressed in Greek by the subjunctive mood and thus is retained in the indirect discourse. “ἔχω here may be expanded in sense to “have [the answer to the question]: “Where shall I sleep?”

### ὅπως *With Noun Clauses* (16)

These occur with verbs of mental perception, expressing the object by using “how” instead of “that”. Example: Luke 24:35 καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐξηγουῦντο . . . ὥς ἐγνώσθη αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου.

<sup>21</sup>For a rather full treatment of the optative mood and its use in indirect questions, see my article, “The Classification of Optatives: A Statistical Study” *GTJ* 9 (1988) 134.



"And they began to relate . . . how He was recognized by them in the breaking of bread." The "how" is not interrogative (as if answering a question "in what manner?") but descriptive. All are indirect discourse, although five of them are listed as *epexegetic* since they stand in apposition to another word which is the grammatical object.

All of the 16 examples use the indicative mood.

### "Ὅπως *With Noun Clauses* (15)

"Ὅπως like ἵνα is more often final, but like ἵνα it can serve with a noun clause.<sup>22</sup> In the NT it usually is used with verbs of asking and deciding, never with verbs of commanding.

#### "Ὅπως with the Subjunctive Mood

In every instance except one the mood is subjunctive, as is normal with this conjunction and often is appropriate with verbs of asking.

#### "Ὅπως with the Indicative Mood

In one example the mood is indicative, where unquestionably the content of the clause is actual, historical, and in no sense potential; Luke 24:20. The clause introduced by ὅπως is in answer to the question ποῖα; (v. 19), which itself is governed by οὐκ ἔγνω (v. 18).

### Πόθεν *With Noun Clauses* (12)

Πόθεν is an interrogative and in each instance it is an indirect quote of a question. The mood is indicative.

### Πότε *With Noun Clauses* (4)

The interrogative πότε occurs only four times in noun clauses; each is an indirect question, in indirect discourse. Three have an indicative verb. The other, Luke 12:36 is an indirect question, but the clause does not appear to be object; rather it seems to depend on some implied verb. The mood is subjunctive; Robertson calls it an indirect deliberative question.<sup>23</sup>

### Καθώς *With Noun Clause* (2)

Only two are found (Acts 15:14 and 3 John 3), objects in indirect discourse with the sense of "how", cf. ὡς and ὅπως. The mood is indicative.

<sup>22</sup>"More and more replacing the inf. after verbs of asking *that*" BAG 580.

<sup>23</sup>A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934) 1044.

## OTHER NOMINAL STRUCTURES

It may be helpful to conclude this consideration of subordinate conjunctive noun clauses by a brief review of other structures which are used in place of nouns. The nominal relative clauses, already mentioned, have been treated at length in the preceding article in this series.<sup>24</sup>

Another group of noun clauses not included within the scope of this paper needs to be brought to attention here; those introduced by interrogative pronouns, τίς and πόσος. Most are direct questions and main clauses, but about 116 out of a total of 540 are quoted indirectly and are thus subordinate noun clauses, though not introduced by a subordinating conjunction.

One of the commonest substitutes for a noun is a substantival participle, usually with the article, occasionally without it. Technically this is not a "clause" since it contains no finite verb. But it has a verbal sense in the participle, it identifies the "doer" of the action involved in that verbal sense, it can take direct or indirect objects like any other verb form, as well as adverbial modifiers. In English almost the only way it can be translated in most cases is by a noun or a nominal relative clause. These have been dealt with in a previous article in this series.<sup>25</sup>

Another similar structure which functions as a noun is the infinitive "clause". Again, it is not technically a clause but it relates to it much as the participle does; with "subject", verbal action, objects, and modifiers. It serves as subject of a sentence, as object, as complement. It sometimes takes the place of clauses, as in indirect discourse. In fact, almost every type of noun function seen in noun clauses has its parallel and pattern in infinitive structures. These too have been studied in depth in a previous article in this series.<sup>26</sup>

Much less frequent but characteristically Greek is the structure which places the article τό before a clause, with the effect that the clause becomes a noun. This "substantivizing" use of the article is more familiar when it is used with adjectives and participles, also with adverbs (e.g., ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν), with prepositional phrases (e.g., τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν), with genitive phrases (e.g., οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ), even with verbs (e.g., τὸ ἀνέβη; Eph 4:7).

The same construction occurs occasionally with whole clauses. Among the clauses included in the present study four of those intro-

<sup>24</sup>Please see footnote #1.

<sup>25</sup>See my article, "The Classification of Participles: A Statistical Study" *GTJ* 5 (1984) 165-67.

<sup>26</sup>See my article, "The Classification of Infinitives: A Statistical Study" *GTJ* 6 (1985) 4-10.

duced by πῶς have this article preceding.<sup>27</sup> Six of the noun clauses introduced by an interrogative pronoun show it.

But especially is this noun-making effect of the article worth noting in some passages where whole sentences, or even groups of words which are not even a clause, are, as it were, put in quote marks and treated as a single word by an article preceding. Examples: Rom 13:9 τὸ γὰρ οὐ μοιχεύσεις, οὐ φονεύσεις, οὐ κλέψεις, οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις καὶ εἴ τις ἑτέρα ἐντολή, ἐν τῇ λόγῳ τούτῳ ἀνακεφαλαιοῦται, ἐν τῇ ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν "For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (cf. also, Matt 19:18; Gal 5:14). In Mark 9:23 the article τό before εἰ δύνῃ (quoted from the lips of the supplicant) calls attention to the element of doubt it reflects, as if to say "Watch out for that expression 'If you can.'" In 1 Cor 4:6 Paul takes an incomplete clause (there is no verb, but one is implied by the μή) and by putting an article before it makes it a policy-setting principal which he admonishes the Corinthians to learn, the "not-beyond-what-is-written" rule.

<sup>27</sup>Luke 22:2, 4; Acts 4:21; 1 Thess 4:1.



## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Canon of Scripture*, by F. F. Bruce. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988. Pp. 349. \$19.95. Cloth.

Although retired from academic life, F. F. Bruce continues to be a productive scholar. *The Canon of Scripture* is a tribute to the erudition and Christian faith of this long-time professor at the University of Manchester. This work considers all the pertinent questions relative to the canon of both the Old Testament and the New Testament and is therefore broader in scope than Bruce Metzger's *Canon of the New Testament*, which Bruce acknowledges with gratitude. It is clear, nevertheless, that Bruce's major concern is the New Testament, about which questions surrounding canonicity are more numerous and controversy is more extensive.

Those who read *The Canon of Scripture* should prepare for a strenuous mental exercise. The subject is complex, and Bruce has written as a scholar for other scholars. Readers without extensive knowledge of early church history would find this work bewildering. They would do better to read R. Laird Harris, *The Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), which covers the subject in a reliable and much less technical manner.

For those with the requisite background and a keen interest in the subject, Bruce has much to offer. He has studied all the issues thoroughly and has cited all the major witnesses to the process of canonization in a masterpiece of research. His method is to trace the development of Christian thinking from the patristic period through the Middle Ages into the Reformation. The conclusion presents his treatment of the criteria for canonicity and is the most important part of the book. One would do well to read this section first. An extensive bibliography lists books only, but the footnotes cite many valuable articles. This work belongs in every theological library.

JAMES EDWARD MCGOLDRICK  
CEDARVILLE COLLEGE

*2 Chronicles*, by Raymond B. Dillard. Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 15. Waco: Word, 1987. Pp. 323. \$24.95. Cloth.

Word Biblical Commentary has added a valuable contribution in Raymond B. Dillard's Commentary on 2 Chronicles. The work is intended to be a continuation of Roddy L. Braun's commentary on 1 Chronicles (Word, 1968) with which Dillard acknowledges his agreement "in the main" (p. xix). This includes maintaining separate hands in Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles (per Williamson, Japhet).

The commentary follows the familiar format of WBC. Each of the 33 sections begins with a bibliography, followed by a translation into English. The textual and grammatical notes observe divergences from the available *Vorlagen* as well as given text-critical information and grammatical notations.

Under "Form/Structure/Setting" Dillard deals with the various issues of form and redaction criticism. His suggestion of paragraph structural markers used by the Chronicler is one of the most helpful contributions of the book. Using various thematic and textual indicators, he develops the surface structure into its constituent parts. Frequently, the structure falls into a chiasmic pattern, and the interpreter is aided in understanding the focal point of the unit, and the place of the various subunits.

The presentation of the structure of chapters 1-9 in the introductory essay was particularly helpful, both for isolating the locus of the unit, and justifying the presence of the various subunits within the larger structure.

Under "Comment" Dillard provides a running explanation of the text, with careful work done in archaeology, history, textual analysis, and the theological emphases of the Chronicler. The archaeological references show wide knowledge of the pertinent literature, and he uses the data appropriately to affirm the reliability of the written documents.

Finally, under "Explanation" Dillard attempts to relate the section to the wider theological interests of the book and Scripture as a whole. Often there is a final "application" comment for the twentieth century audience.

It is important to observe that the commentary is built around two key essays: "The Chronicler's Solomon," and "Reward and Punishment in Chronicles: The Theology of Immediate Retribution" (cf. *WTJ* 34 [1980] 289-300, 46 [1984] 164-72). For Dillard, the Chronicler's theology is built around the "twin pillars" of temple/cult and the Davidic Covenant. Hence, Solomon is validated as he relates positively to these "pillars," and reward and punishment of the subsequent kings and community is measured in accord with their fidelity and support of the same standards (cf. Uzziah discussion, p. 79). Hence, the message to the post-exilic audience is clear: the means of blessing and prosperity come by endorsement of these two institutions.

Dillard, further, affirms the messianic expectation to be found in Solomon (cp. the hesitancy of Braun). Solomon as a man of "rest," in contrast to David as a man of "war," is idealized even beyond David, and points to the final Solomon still to come. Dillard writes, "Though the throne of Israel is vacant, the continuity of the Davidic dynasty remains" (p. 59). While the Chronicler presents the means of blessing for now (temple and David), in Solomon there is hope for the future.

Dillard unapologetically affirms his conservative stance toward Scripture (cf. p. xviii), and carefully presents the Chronicler as both theologian and historian. He acknowledges that the Chronicler's historiography (e.g., chronology, genre, use of hyperbole), must play a leading role in this discussion, but "theological interests need not be at the expense of historicity" (p. 227).

He makes several attempts at harmonizing the variant accounts of Kings and Chronicles (e.g., pp. 64-65), and is also willing to recognize that solutions may not be readily apparent (cf. p. 125). It was encouraging to see the text given the benefit of the doubt in its historicity rather than being brought



under suspicion when it did not seem to accord with modern understanding. Even Jehoshaphat's choirs are defended (p. 158)!

In the synoptic analyses, Dillard seems to have avoided, for the most part, the trap of suggesting that the Chronicler's *Tendenz* is only found in changes and additions to his *Vorlage* (per Lemke, although cf. comments on p. 40). He is comfortable with the notion that the *Vorlage* may well carry the Chronicler's *Tendenz*, and thus to reproduce it nearly verbatim does not diminish its theological polemic (cf. pp. 47, 52). The Chronicler probably had a number of texts available (cf. Talmon's discussions of OT textual history), and so more often than not, it would have been a matter of *choice* of text rather than free composition for the sake of polemic. Dillard also expresses a well received caution about drawing too much from departures from available *Vorlagen*.

A minor weakness was found in many of the final remarks made under the rubric "Explanation." While there was some excellent work done in developing the theology of the section under consideration, some of the extrapolations for the present day seemed a little forced (e.g., pp. 136, 145). On the other hand, many were excellent (e.g., pp. 75, 203, 237, 282), so the reviewer realizes the subjective nature of this comment.

Further, the reviewer would concur with Thronveit on his comment about the weakness of Appendix B (cf., *JBL* 108:3 [1989] 512-14).

Dillard's book is a worthy contribution to the study of 2 Chronicles in WBC. There is reasonable continuity with Braun's work on 1 Chronicles, although his approach to the text is more conservative, and the twin pillars of Temple and David provide a slightly different emphasis than Braun who focuses on the temple and sees also other institutions and persons gaining their legitimacy from this single pillar.

Dillard has produced an excellent work that will provide a standard for any study in 2 Chronicles.

DAVID BARKER  
ONTARIO, CANADA

*The Faith of Israel: Its Expression in the Books of the Old Testament*, by William J. Dumbrell. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988. Pp. 286. \$12.95. Paper.

*The Faith of Israel* introduces the theology of the Old Testament by surveying the theological contribution of each biblical book.

As in his two preceding works (*Covenant and Creation* and *The End of the Beginning*) Dumbrell suggests that the faith of Israel begins with Creation and the divine statement of God's intention for the world (for man to serve as vice-regent over the world). Israel's covenant experience demonstrates her special relationship with Yahweh as well as Yahweh's saving purpose for the world at large. Dumbrell regards the Old Testament as a whole as "a record of how Israel's thinking advanced from creation to covenant at Sinai to a new covenant calculated to lead to a new creation" (p. 10). In spite of this

common thread, Dumbrell asserts that any search for a center to Old Testament theology is "illusory and unnecessary" (p. 11).

The entire work draws on the recognition that "the authors of the biblical materials had defined objectives in mind" (p. 9) and presents the theology underlying those objectives. While in some biblical books an overmastering purpose is clearly discernible (e.g., Exodus, Kings, Isaiah, Ezekiel), anthological interests account for the contents and structure of other books (e.g., Deuteronomy, Psalms, wisdom literature).

Dumbrell divides his book into four major parts, closely following the Jewish canon: the Law, the Former Prophets, the Latter Prophets, and the Writings. A chapter is devoted to each biblical book.

The layout of each chapter is conducive to easy reading and quick reference. Three components make up a chapter. An introductory section presents a brief overview of the book and places it in its canonical context. A skeletal outline is then provided. The bulk of the chapter is arranged according to this outline. Some chapters depart from this arrangement. A skeletal outline is missing from the chapters dealing with Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Ezekiel. Also, in certain books the introductory section is longer due to the significant issues in that book (e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel). The Psalter is covered more in the fashion of an Old Testament introduction (e.g., the composition of the Psalter, types of psalms, etc.) while Deuteronomy is examined thematically. The text is easy to read with a few scattered footnote references located in the body itself.

With such a vast corpus of material covered in a volume of this length (279 pages), some will be disappointed because of the brief treatment certain books receive. Chapter lengths vary from 2 pages (Obadiah) to 15 (Isaiah and Jeremiah). While Dumbrell has paced himself very well in most cases, Deuteronomy and the Psalter are covered too briefly.

The value of the bibliography would be enhanced if the references were categorized in accordance with the volume's major sections if not by the biblical books themselves. Also, indication of the most significant works for each section would be helpful. In its present form it gives the reader limited help for further study.

This work would be most helpful as a companion volume with an Old Testament introduction text for a college Bible survey class or to provide a layperson with a better grasp of the development of theology in the Old Testament.

MICHAEL GRISANTI  
DALLAS, TEXAS

*Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, by Everett Ferguson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987. Pp. xviii + 515. \$25.00. Paper.

An ever widening chasm separates late 20th century western culture from the culture of the first century Mediterranean world. Though many affirm

that the NT cannot be understood apart from its historical context, that is often more rhetoric than reality. For it is a difficult chasm to bridge, given our limited resources to learn to think and speak as they did 2,000 years ago.

Fortunately, a surge of interest in the culture of the NT is evident in this last quarter of the 20th century. While the study of OT backgrounds has been commonplace—some erroneously argued that help is needed for understanding the OT but not for the NT since the backgrounds of the NT are provided by the OT—the study of NT backgrounds has only recently begun in earnest. This shift is evident in the increased attention to Hellenistic and Roman archaeology, to second temple Judaism, to OT pseudepigrapha, to Hellenistic literary genre, to Qumran and the NT, to magical papyri, and to the Nag Hammadi codices. Despite the work of scholars in these areas, no textbook has been written that thoroughly introduces students to this rewarding but diverse and complex area.

The urgent need for a textbook of NT backgrounds has been superbly filled by *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. Ferguson's achievement can hardly be overstated given the breadth of the topics covered and his consistently accurate and informed discussions. His encyclopedic approach to the first century opens the door to all aspects of life, including politics, slavery, citizenship, marriage and family, travel, taxes, athletics, music, letter writing, astrology, philosophy, Jewish sects, festivals, proselytism, sanhedrin, the legal status of Christianity etc. The bulk of the book is in three central chapters: Hellenistic-Roman religions, Hellenistic-Roman philosophies, and Judaism.

This is a book that everyone will profit from. Each discussion is complemented with sources for additional reading, first the primary sources and then selected secondary sources. Ferguson is adamant (p. ix) on the importance of reading the ancient sources firsthand, thus the reader who takes this book seriously will have more than just the 500 pages provided by Ferguson; he will be guided into thousands of pages of primary and secondary sources for reading and study.

Though Ferguson's purpose is not to offer new explanations of NT passages in light of the backgrounds he presents, he does include scriptural references throughout the book (and a scripture index) that will lead readers to their own reflection on the impact of backgrounds to understanding the NT. Some of Ferguson's discussions, however, do have direct and significant bearing on the NT. For example, a difficult problem that he handles effectively is whether the Pharisees are as pharisaical as a simple reading of the NT suggest. He concludes: "Precisely because there was so much in common [between Jesus and the Pharisees], the points on which Jesus took issue stand out boldly" (p. 409). Even more helpful is Ferguson's "Perspective on Parallels" (p. xiii-xv). Against the view of many—that parallels between Christianity and pagan or Jewish ideas allow Christianity to be explained away as a natural product of its environment—Ferguson responds that Christian faith does not depend on uniqueness, that while similarities exist there are also notable differences, especially in worldview, and that the similarities may in part be the result of God's providential preparation for Christianity.

If *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* has a defect it is one of imbalance. In the last fifty years scholars have focused on the Jewish background to the

NT, albeit a Hellenized Judaism, rather than on the strictly Greek background, i.e., religion and philosophy. Though the pendulum may eventually swing back the other way, with the continuing publication, for example, of the monumental *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (de Gruyter, 1972-), Ferguson has decided to go against the present tide and concentrate on Hellenistic-Roman philosophy and religion (2/5 of his book). Though admitting that Judaism is the principal context of early Christianity, Ferguson concluded that "most students come to this study less well informed on the larger Greco-Roman environment" (p. ix). Unfortunately, though students will gain much insight into the vagaries of Greek religion and philosophy, they would have been better helped in their understanding of the NT if as much attention had been given to the beliefs and practices of the Jews.

Nevertheless, of all the books currently available that address aspects of NT backgrounds, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* is the first that students and pastors should purchase and read. That the NT cannot be understood apart from its historical context can now move from rhetoric to reality for those who read this book.

D. BRENT SANDY  
LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

*Philippians*, by Moisés Silva. The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary. Chicago: Moody Press, 1988. Pp. xxiii + 255. \$21.95. Cloth.

Often in the past, exegetical commentaries were written as reference works providing information on isolated words and phrases in a biblical text. By following this atomistic approach, such commentaries may have focused on a series of details and problems while ignoring the main teaching of the text. In his commentary on *Philippians*, Silva chooses instead to concentrate on the thrust of the text itself. He does not overlook detailed problems of text, language, and interpretation, but he discusses these problems only to the extent that they have a bearing on the thrust of the passage under consideration. When dealing with exegetical problems, Silva shows balanced judgment and insight. After providing an exegetical treatment of a passage, Silva goes on to include a section of additional notes on details of lesser importance for the understanding of the passage.

Silva begins the commentary with a discussion on the historical and literary context of Paul's letter to the *Philippians*. The commentary opts for fairly traditional viewpoints on the historical questions surrounding the letter. The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the *Philippians* during his Roman imprisonment. The letter is an integrated whole and not a compilation of three separate letters of Paul. When dealing with opponents, Paul was combating groups which were all influenced by a Judaizing heresy. Opposition and adversity had created disagreements, distrust, and a poisonous spirit of self-seeking among the *Philippian* believers. They had lost their sense of

Christian joy and were tempted to abandon the struggle to persevere in their Christian confession. Paul wrote this letter to encourage the Philippian believers to stand fast and contend, to run the race without looking back, and to take seriously the responsibility to work out their salvation. In encouraging this spiritual effort, Paul did not minimize the importance of God's grace, but rather stressed the need for complete dependence on God in sanctification.

Silva has produced a good and useful commentary on Paul's letter to the Philippians. Good commentaries raise issues that are worth discussing and this is true of Silva's commentary as well. A positive feature of the commentary is that Silva takes care to trace the flow of Paul's argument throughout the letter. He wants to determine how each passage fits in with Paul's overall argument in Philippians, since the meaning of a particular proposition is largely determined by its place in the larger argument. However, Silva's criteria for determining the structure of Paul's overall argument calls for further discussion.

Silva nowhere makes clear the method by which he analyzes the overall structure of the letter. To some extent, Silva follows the pattern of the typical Pauline letter form. Thus, Phil 1:1-2 constitutes the salutation and Phil 1:3-11 conforms to Paul's pattern of opening a letter with a thanksgiving. Paul closes the letter in Phil 4:21-23 with the result that the body of the letter extends from 1:12-4:20. Silva points out that this data is only minimally helpful in tracing the flow of Paul's argument. Silva notes one attempt to apply rhetorical categories to the argument in Philippians, but he dismisses this approach as not fully persuasive. One literary approach to the structure of Philippians highlights an *inclusio* that brackets a section extending from Phil 1:27 to 4:3. Paul begins his exhortation to the Philippians in 1:27 using the terms *πολιτεύεσθε . . . στήκετε . . . συναθροῦτες*. Paul then concludes the major portion of his exhortation in 3:20-4:3 with the related terms *πολίτευμα . . . στήκετε . . . συνήθησαν*. Thus, Phil 1:27-4:3 functions as the main body of Paul's argument in which Paul encourages the Philippian believers to stand and struggle together as they exercise their Christian citizenship. Silva notes the possibility of this *inclusio*, but he finally discards it in his own understanding of the letter's outline.

In the end, Silva does not make clear how he has chosen to determine the arrangement of Paul's argument and at times he doubts whether portions of the letter actually fit into the flow of Paul's argument. For example, Silva emphasizes the abruptness of chapter three. He accounts for this lack of continuity in Paul's argument by postulating that Paul intended to conclude his letter after instructing the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord (3:1). Paul stopped writing or dictating after these words and by the time that he returned to the document, he had decided to add another doctrinal section. Thus, the key to understanding this section is no longer found through its place in Paul's larger argument, but rather through the historical circumstances surrounding Paul's writing of the letter which we are able to arrive at only through speculation.

In conclusion, Silva has written a commentary that will be useful to those preaching and teaching Paul's letter to the Philippians. Since believers



today need to strive for unity, humility, and joyful obedience, the message of Philippians continues to be relevant. It is a message that needs to be proclaimed and taught.

JOEL WILLIAMS  
DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*1, 2 Peter, Jude*, by Curtis Vaughan and Thomas D. Lea. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988. Pp. 240. \$8.95. Paper.

This compact offering is among the last installments in Zondervan's *Bible Study Commentary* (originally *Study Guide Commentary*) series. It is the second series volume co-authored by Lea and Vaughan, who has also contributed several of the other N.T. books to *B.S.C.* Lea is Professor of New Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX, from which faculty Vaughan is retired.

Within the aims and space limitations of *B.S.C.*, the authors have done a solid piece of work. It, of course, is not designed for scholars. A series like *B.S.C.* and, in a slightly different way, Moody's *Everyman's Bible Commentaries* fall toward the most basic and non-technical end of the current evangelical multi-volume commentary spectrum.

With discussions of introductory questions and exegetical issues given limited space, there is very little opportunity for Lea and Vaughan to show off their scholarly wares. However, given the restrictions, they do their job well overall, and occasionally, exceptionally so (e.g., the handling of options on 1 Pet 3:18–22, pp. 89–102, in which they concur with W. Grudem, *1 Peter* [T.N.T.C. replacement volume], in regard to "the spirits in prison").

On other passages and questions of perennial interest, Vaughan and Lea opt for seeing believers in general as "the new Israel" in 1 Pet 2:9 (p. 48); take a basic traditionalist stance on the wife's submission to her husband in 1 Pet 3:1ff. (pp. 71–72); view Silas as Peter's amanuensis in 1 Pet 5:12 (p. 132) and "Babylon" (5:13) as Rome (p. 133); are vaguely non-committal on the question of whether 2 Pet and Jude are dependent on one or the other (p. 138) and in what sense Christ "bought" the false teachers in 2 Pet 2:1 (pp. 167–68); understand both 2 Pet 2:4 (p. 170) and Jude 6 (pp. 215–15) as referring to fallen angels in Gen 6; and concisely, but ably, defend the inspiration of Jude in quoting from 1 Enoch (vv 14–15; pp. 224–25).

Admittedly, this reviewer does not agree with the conclusions of the authors at several key junctures (though their views are thoroughly evangelical). Nevertheless, Vaughan and Lea have produced a little commentary that will be quite useful at the introductory level, whether in the college classroom, a Sunday school class, or a home Bible study. It will not compete with Grudem's treatment of (*1 Peter*) in the new Tyndale series or Michaels' (*1 Peter*) or Bauckham's (*Jude, 2 Peter*) and the *Word Biblical Commentary*. Nor, was it intended to do so.



Scholars and pastors can be grateful for a concise, readable, and helpful treatment of the letters of Peter and Jude. Here is something the leader can put into the hands of younger Christians who are eager to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 3:18), complete with study questions.

A. BOYD LUTER, JR.  
TALBOT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Witness to Jesus Christ*, by John De Gruchy, ed. London: Collins Liturgical Press, 1987. Pp. 308. \$19.95. Cloth.

This book is volume four in The Making of Modern Theology Series, which presents collections of carefully edited texts from nineteenth and twentieth century theological authors. The preceding three volumes offer excerpts from Rudolf Bultmann, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Paul Tillich.

In *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* John De Gruchy, a professor at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, has assembled portions of the writings of the famed German scholar and victim of Nazi tyranny in a topical sequence arranged under the headings "Theological Foundations," "Christology and Reality," "Confessing Christ Concretely," "The Life of Free Responsibility," and "Christ in a World Come of Age." Most of the selections from Bonhoeffer's pen have appeared in other places, but De Gruchy has corrected some ambiguous translations and collated the material into a convenient format so that one familiar with Bonhoeffer's ideas may locate his expressions about the crucial subjects Bonhoeffer addressed.

In a brief introduction the editor explains the development of Bonhoeffer as a theologian in the context of German religious thinking in the first half of the twentieth century. Although this is merely a biographical sketch, it shows clearly how Bonhoeffer reacted to his times and why so much of his theology is autobiographical rather than exegetical in character.

Although Dietrich Bonhoeffer criticized American liberals for emphasizing social and political matters at the expense of biblical and theological studies, his own religious beliefs reflect the heavy impression of such concerns upon the formation and expression of his doctrinal convictions. Bonhoeffer took the Bible seriously, but his unquestioning acceptance of higher criticism prevented him from affirming its complete trustworthiness. Even though he sometimes assailed rationalist theologians, he acknowledged the basis of their view by accepting critical theories about the composition of various books of the Bible.

Reading Bonhoeffer's works can be a tedious undertaking for one familiar with the technical language of German philosophical theologians, and unfortunately, this collection of excerpts does not do much to make his ideas intelligible. Bonhoeffer appears here as a heroic figure whose religious convictions compelled him to join the resistance against Hitler, but understanding

his complex theological ideas remains very difficult. Many of the selections here are very obtuse. Instead of allowing Bonhoeffer to speak for himself in his often opaque and awkward way, it would be better for a skilled translator and interpreter to paraphrase his teachings in non-technical language, which De Gruchy has failed to do even in the introductory portions to each section. Only readers with extensive knowledge of modern German theology will find this book useful.

JAMES EDWARD MCGOLDRICK  
CEDARVILLE COLLEGE

*The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, by Matthew Fox. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xiii + 278. \$14.95. Paper.

Matthew Fox calls for a radical reinterpretation of the Christ event in order to meet the challenges and ailments of contemporary society. His primary concern seems to be the propagation of a living cosmology that is able to meet the present environmental crises. The presuppositional framework Fox employs could be labeled "a mystical and Christological pantheism" (Christ is in everything and everything is in Christ). He draws insight from the wisdom traditions of various cultures, including Native American, Eastern, and especially medieval Catholic mystics.

According to Fox, the killing of Mother Earth is the foremost "ethical, spiritual, and human issue of our planet" (p. 144). The only hope for saving Mother Earth from matricide is a spiritual-mystical awakening. Mysticism leads to the awareness of the interconnection of all things, break down dualisms (especially the religious dualism that separates creator from creature), and engenders peace. A mystical awakening on a planetary scale must precede global healing. This involves a cultural awakening to a living cosmology that recognizes the Cosmic Christ in everything.

This scenario is metaphorically depicted by the pascal mystery. The crucifixion of Jesus represents the crucifixion of Mother Earth and the Mother Principle. This is a cosmic event encompassing all the pains of nature. The resurrection of Jesus represents the resurrection of the human psyche through a mystical experience. When the Cosmic Christ is resurrected in our souls, we become alive to our interconnectedness and responsibility to the cosmos. The second coming of Christ refers to an awakening of society with the living cosmology of the Cosmic Christ. The Cosmic Christ is already here. The coming is a matter of the consciousness being awakened to his presence. This Cosmic Christ ideology will usher in a global renaissance in religion and culture that can heal Mother Earth.

The Cosmic Christ is variously defined as "Cosmic Wisdom" (p. 243), "the image of God presents in all things" (p. 8), "the living reality in all things" (p. 242). The most common designation is "the pattern that connects" (p. 133). The concept of the Cosmic Christ is not confined to Christianity, but is found with differing terminology in all religious traditions (e.g., the wisdom

writers of ancient Israel, Native American religions, Hinduism, Buddhism). The Buddha nature and the Cosmic Christ are one in the same (pp. 231–32). Fox calls for Christian theologians to abandon the quest for the historical Jesus and to commence the quest for the Cosmic Christ (p. 78). He also calls for a deep ecumenism of all world religions, united by their Cosmic Christ traditions. The Cosmic Christ encourages man “to embrace diversity as a civilization,” even to the point of condoning sexual deviants such as homosexuals (p. 207).

Fox reduces Jesus to one of many enlightened mystics who have incarnated the Cosmic Christ (pp. 67, 145). We are all called on to incarnate the Cosmic Christ as Jesus did (p. 137). Once the historical Jesus is differentiated from the Cosmic Christ, Christianity is freed from its anthropocentric idea of the incarnation (p. 79). Concerning the kingdom parables, Fox states, “Jesus has seen something that so many others have missed: that all is in God and God is in all. Or, that all is in the kingdom/queendom of God and the kingdom/queendom of God is in all. For Jesus the kingdom/queendom of God is a *panentheistic realm*” (p. 70). Jesus called for a repentance, but for Fox this means change of heart to see the world in a way that can bring about cosmic healing. The good news Jesus preached is not the forgiveness of individuals sins, but a new vision of healing of the cosmos, a “solidarity with God, neighbor, and all of God’s creatures” (p. 151). Jesus died a tragic, untimely death (p. 140). As such Jesus is the symbol of Mother Earth; the innocent is crucified, yet continues to resurrect and to bless those who mistreat her (p. 145).

Fox decries individual salvation, calling it heresy and a product of a Newtonian piecemeal worldview (p. 151). Salvation is cosmic and universal, not individual; it is a comprehensive healing of the infirmities of the cosmos (p. 151). Individuals do not need to be saved, only enlightened through a mystical experience. Man’s problem is not sin against a personal God, but ignorance of his own true self and his interconnection with the rest of creation. Everyone is a Cosmic Christ or child of God, even if he does not realize it (p. 137). Since everyone is a mystic and possesses the Cosmic Christ, everyone has the ability to draw near to his source, to break down the barriers between his soul and God (pp. 50, 56), and to change his ways and to cease killing Mother Earth (p. 234). Fox does renounce sin and upholds justice. These terms, however, are not grounded in the character of a personal God, but rather in the impact our choices will have on the planet and society several generations from now (p. 23). This basis for ethics is a natural corollary of a deified cosmos.

In summary, Fox calls for “the regrounding of faith in a mystical, prophetic, cosmological worldview—a transformation and renewal, not merely a reformation or reshuffling of a tired agenda” (p. 7). He claims that patriarchal forms of Christianity lack a cosmology and reduce everything to Newtonian mechanism. This lack of a living cosmology is the reason for the devastation of our planet. Fox defines his cosmology or worldview as (1) a scientific story about the origins of the universe, (2) a mystical response to the awe of being in the universe, and (3) a creative expression of the response that awakens body, soul, and society (p. 1).

Aside from the obvious departures from orthodox theology, there are many issues that Fox raises which are worthy of consideration and interaction by the evangelical community, such as revitalizing worn out modes of worship, responding to societal needs and environmental issues, cultivating the arts, recapturing a youthful joy of the Christian experience, and making Christianity relevant. His concerns in these areas are commendable, yet the need to undergo a radical paradigm shift to meet these needs is highly questionable. This is an important book that could very well mark the direction of liberal theology in the twenty-first century.

RICHARD A. YOUNG  
CHATTANOOGA, TN

*Worlds Apart; A Handbook on World Views*, second edition, by Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989. Pp. 307. \$14.95. Paper.

The authors present seven world views from the religious perspective of how they deal with their God concept. Theism, atheism, pantheism, panentheism, deism, finite godism, and polytheism constitute the seven world views presented and critiqued. Representatives are chosen for each world view and then their views are presented by explicating their conception of God, the world, miracles, man, evil, ethics, and history with its telos. Each section ends with a summary of its tenets and a positive statement of its contributions as well as a negative statement of its criticisms.

The world view presentations are preceded by an introduction that defines a world view as a "way of viewing or interpreting all of reality." Each reader is viewed as a shopper in a world view catalog. The catch phrase of the introduction is "world views do make a world of difference," and thus buying one warrants careful shopping. The conclusion of the book provides the shopper with criteria to evaluate each world view presented in the catalog. Consistency, comprehensiveness, livability, and affirmability comprise the criteria to evaluate the world views on the market. The shopper is left to apply these without aid from the authors with the obvious implication that any rational person will purchase theism.

Many perplexing questions arise while reading the book. Why does the title promise a categorization of world views and then deliver a catalog of God views? In presenting Christian theism how is it possible to neglect the reformers in favor of C. S. Lewis? In fact the value set that stands behind who is included and who is excluded as representatives of the world view is never obvious to the reader. Perhaps the single most disturbing flaw in presentation is the homogeneous structure forced on each position. There is no obvious attempt to present the view with a literary hermeneutic internal to the view and its ethos. It all seems so cut and dry, even superficial.

It does not appear that the book makes any significant advance over James Sire's updated and expanded edition of *The Universe Next Door*. It is difficult to envision the book being used as a textbook and thus it seems most

suited as a tool for evangelism from an evidential foundation. The problem with using the book for evangelism is that there is no gospel in the book.

JAMES M. GRIER  
GRAND RAPIDS BAPTIST SEMINARY

*Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith*, by Ronald H. Nash. Zondervan, 1988. Pp. 294. \$17.95. Cloth.

This new work by Dr. Ronald H. Nash (professor of philosophy and religion at Western Kentucky University) setting forth critical issues, questions and analyses of the Christian faith in the face of modern opposition is more than excellent. This text may be classified both as philosophy and religion (because of some of the issues addressed) and apologetics, and therefore can accomplish purposes that many previous works could not. In the process of endeavoring to help the thinking Christian think through and answer antagonistic views of our time, Nash is also able to aid in clarifying what is and is not truly of the faith. He sets a perspectival context in which the Christian can understand and live the faith. His interaction with recent thought produces fresh and sometimes surprising outcomes.

The whole of the study is explicitly set within the Christian world-view. The nature and role of competing world views and their interaction is made clear as foundational at the outset. The question and nature of our rationality, how we know we know (epistemology), is another worthy inclusion. Upon this effectively presented infrastructure Nash cogently and quite completely sets forth (reckoning the limitation to his space) the arguments for God's existence (including the often overlooked argument from religious experience), the problem of evil, the question and possibility of miracles (including an effective critique of Hume), with a very helpful concluding section ("Unfinished Business").

Among *many* strong points and features that I found in this book I will describe but a few. The first two sections (*cf.* above) on "world-view" and "epistemology" are not only crucial but they bind the entire work together into a cohesive whole. Nash's discussion of the arguments brings to bear the recent work of renowned (?) Reformed philosophers such as Plantinga, Mavrodes, Wolterstorff and Alston, as well as English philosopher Richard Swinburne, in forming much more effective, non-fallacious argumentation while seeing the limits (and person relativity) of each. In parallel (and up-to-date) fashion, Nash establishes the rationality of Christian theism from the presence and extent of evil and the Naturistic world-view (*cf.* miracles) which Nash shows to be clearly self-defeating. Another plus of the book is Nash's effective review questions at the end of each chapter. These, when utilized, solidify the thought of the chapter in the reader's mind.

I found, actually, nothing negative in this book. Only one point caused some initial concern—the chapter on "Gratuitous Evil" which sets forth the case for the reality (or at least the possibility) of purposeless evil in the world. This apparent affirmation of gratuitous evil sounded too close to a process



theodicy (*cf.* Griffin, et al.), but upon closer examination this concern provides to be a misunderstanding within the wider context of Nash's argumentation. His response and analysis here are penetrating and very useful.

This text is highly recommended for both college and seminary apologetics courses or even philosophy of religion. However, the book is well written and not at all beyond the grasp of any educated Christian (which is also Nash's hope for the book).

JOHN D. MORRISON  
LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

*The World that Perished*, by John C. Whitcomb. Revised edition 1988. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. Pp. 178. \$9.00. Paper.

After 15 years and almost as many reprintings, Dr. Whitcomb has thoroughly updated this popular study of the Genesis flood. Initially, the book was a detailed reply to criticisms that had been leveled against Whitcomb and Morris' 1961 *The Genesis Flood* by secular geologists and theistic evolutionists. This revised edition still fulfills that purpose, but also presents a wealth of resource material, current events in creation-science, and an undiluted dose of biblical truth.

The book is divided into four parts: the supernatural nature of the flood, its universal destruction, modern evidence, and a defense of the biblical account. Scientific details include the frozen mammoths (p. 81), coal formation (p. 84), and geological lessons learned from Mount St. Helens (p. 104). More discussion is needed of continental drift and also the post-flood ice age, but this can await the next revision. The technical areas are followed by an insightful analysis of the failure of so many people to grasp the truth of the worldwide judgment by water. John Whitcomb sees two reasons, the first being an attitude of rejection of any miraculous intervention in history. The second is a total lack of knowledge of the multiple modern evidences for a recent universal flood (p. 90). On both counts, the secular scientific world is guilty of ruling out the biblical alternatives. There is a common, harmful misconception that the early chapters of Genesis are true only in a "vaguely religious" sense (p. 141). This neglect of the foundational book of Genesis has resulted in predictable results: controversy and confusion. As always, correct conclusions concerning the Bible and science depend on a correct starting point (p. 96). This book has the answers for those who are interested in or perplexed by the subject of origins and flood geology.

DON B. DEYOUNG  
GRACE COLLEGE

*Biology Through the Eyes of Faith*, by Richard T. Wright. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989. Pp. 298. \$9.95. Paper.

Dr. Richard Wright is professor of biology at Gordon College, Wenham, MA. This book is the fourth in a series sponsored by the Christian College Coalition, an informal network of private colleges including Grace College.



The other three studies in the Christian faith series discuss Psychology, History, and Literature. The books are designed as supplemental textbooks in introductory-level courses, particularly for Christian colleges.

Dr. Wright examines several contemporary issues in biology. This rapidly progressing field of science is clearly outpacing a reasoned, ethical analysis of its discoveries and directions. The author sees biology as undergoing four recent "revolutions" in the sense defined by Thomas Kuhn. These major changes in scientific thinking include origins (Darwinism), biomedicine (technical advances), genetics (mastering DNA, the blueprint of life), and the environment (stewardship versus abuse).

The section on origins is one hundred pages long, one-third of the book. Richard Wright correctly sees the origins issue as fundamental to one's views in all other areas. Unfortunately, the treatment shows a strong bias toward theistic evolution and against a recent supernatural creation. On most other issues in the book, the author invites the reader to make his own decisions. On origins, however, such flexibility appears to be lacking. Dr. Wright quotes extensively from the French theologian, Henri Blocher. Blocher believes the biblical days of creation are to be taken as topical or symbolic rather than literal. This view, sometimes called the literary or framework view, has been thoroughly refuted by conservative scholars. Four different times, Wright recommends a book by Howard Van Till of Calvin College, titled *The Fourth Day*. Van Till's book has raised a storm of controversy for its promotion of an evolutionary view of astronomy. Meanwhile, literature by creationists is not recommended at all. No mention of the Creation Research Society Quarterly appears, a technical periodical that has been treating the book's issues, including environmental stewardship, for twenty-five years. Five book statements of serious concern to the creationist will be mentioned here: *First*, comparative embryology is listed as favoring evolution, without comment (p. 122). This "evidence for common ancestry" has been fully discredited for many years. *Second*, the fossil record is said to give "overwhelming evidence" of great age and also many changes in living things (p. 128). The evidence for evolution is also said to be "strong and convincing (p. 137)." *Third*, Scripture is declared to answer who created the cosmos, and why, but not how or when (p. 132). *Fourth*, literalists are accused of "loading origins down with supernaturalism . . . (they have) erected a very large stumbling block to belief in the God of the Bible (p. 81)." *Fifth*, the fossils "point to the strong possibility that *Homo sapiens* evolved from previous hominids (p. 146)." Many Christians, if not most, would strongly oppose each of these five statements. If used as a Christian college text, as planned, a generation of students will surely be misled by the one-sided approach, and many parents will be rightfully upset at the undermining of a literal view of Genesis. The book's pro-evolution stance will simply preclude its use at many conservative Christian colleges.

Following the disappointing chapters on origins, the balance of the book becomes more helpful. In both biomedicine and in genetics, Dr. Wright introduces terminology and current issues for the untrained reader. He takes a conservative, cautionary position in such biological frontiers as amniocentesis and gene splicing: "Having learned to read God's instructions in DNA research, we are also revising them . . . it is clearly vital to make sure that this

knowledge is used in a context of responsible stewardship, and used with great respect and awe for the remarkable work of creation that it is (pp. 217, 219)." Every Christian needs to ponder the bioethics of these fast changing, research areas, in the light of scripture.

The book's best discussion concerns the environment. Dr. Wright clearly believes strongly in the Christian's responsibility toward present day creation stewardship. The author's course at Gordon College, Stewardship and Survival, has helped him to develop a rich presentation. Uninitiated readers may wonder about the invitation to "participate in redeeming the creation (p. 252)," and to reform culture (p. 268). However, Dr. Wright gives a convincing argument for a Christian attitude of action in behalf of the present day Creation. In view of current headlines concerning abuse and deterioration of the environment, the stewardship challenge is much needed.

This book will be widely distributed on Christian college campuses. On the fundamental issue of origins, the book's strong opposition to a literal creation is a profound weakness. The other areas provide good material for discussion of the frontiers in biology.

DON B. DEYOUNG  
GRACE COLLEGE

*Enduring to the End: Jehovah's Witnesses and Bible Doctrine*, by John Hartog II. Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1987. Pp. 168. \$5.95. Paper.

The stated purpose of the author of this work is not to refute Witness theology but rather to point out where it differs from orthodoxy (p. 10). In doing this he has produced a work which not only answers questions concerning the doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses, but also teaches the basic truths of orthodox theology.

The book begins with an overview of the history of the Witnesses which goes all the way back to their beginning under Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916). This four chapter overview gives interesting insights into the development of the movement and the struggle for power within it. It also charts their amazing growth, especially in the last 50 years, to the point where now they have two and one half million members.

The main part of this book is a presentation of "Witness doctrines organized according to the ten areas of systematic theology (p. 9)." In these ten chapters Hartog points out the major errors of the Witnesses which cause them to be called a cult. He also comments on a number of unusual doctrines held by the Witnesses. Some of their unorthodox teachings are that before coming to earth, Christ was the archangel Michael (p. 75); at the time of His baptism, Christ in some way became God's spirit Son and the Messiah (p. 79); Christ did not rise bodily from the grave but instead rose as a spirit being (p. 85); Jesus, as Michael the archangel, cast Satan out of heaven sometime between 1914 and 1918 (p. 87); the Spirit of God is not a person but instead God's invisible active force (p. 92); before Satan's fall he was the overseer of human kind (p. 101); and Adam was created perfect (p. 116).

This book contains many other helpful features. The author thoroughly documents the material presented, much of it coming from the publications of the Witnesses. There is a bibliography of 9 pages divided between "General Books," "Watchtower Books" and "Articles." Also, there is a list of other groups which have sprung up from the teachings of Charles Taze Russell. This list includes the periodicals of each group. Furthermore, the book is easy to read: It has large type, short chapters, which are clearly outlined and divided, and interesting quotations which introduce each chapter. These features make the book valuable for the serious student of the Witnesses and interesting for less serious students.

W. EDWARD GLENNY  
CENTRAL SEMINARY

*Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*, by Norman L. Geisler. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989. Pp. 335. \$16.95. Paper.

This book is intended by the author to supersede his book, *Options in Contemporary Christian Ethics*, and to replace his book, *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues*. Dr. Geisler indicates that a number of factors make this book necessary. These factors include the following: changes in approach to certain topics; an updating of the material; emergence of new issues; and a shift in viewpoint from earlier works on such issues as abortion. The format of the book is very similar to his previous textbook, *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues*, in that part one deals with ethical systems and part two deals with ethical problems. This design contributes to the major weakness of the book as a textbook in ethics, namely the paucity of any discussion of a Christian theory of value including the nature and classification of values and any discussion of a Christian theory of motivation.

The major shift in viewpoints seems to focus on the removal of the sevenfold hierarchy of values used to determine which commands of God are higher and lower from the previous book with its implications for a reversal of his view on the nature of personhood. It is interesting to note that although the Plotinian value hierarchy is now removed from the book, the necessity of grading absolutes as higher and lower is still maintained with the same basic results as before, i.e., mercy is higher than truth telling. The most radical change in the book is Dr. Geisler's disavowal of his previous view that personhood is a function, and his espousal of the view that personhood has ontological status. This paradigm shift in itself brings a fundamental change in his view of abortion. Both of these basic changes are welcome shifts in his position.

Graded absolutism, the preferred descriptive phrase for his position, has been addressed and responded to many times in the ethics' literature including a major critique of graded absolutism in the *Grade Journal*, Spring 1987 issue. The basic thesis of this position is that moral commands are absolute in their context. When the contexts come into conflict one must determine which command is higher and obey it. God gives the person an exemption

from the lower command in this setting of contextually conflicting absolute norms. One, therefore, may be justified in lying in order to keep the higher command of mercy, i.e., life saving. The conclusion of this view seems to be that there is only one non-contextual absolute-absolute, and that is when graded absolutes come in conflict always keep the higher and be exempted from the lower. There is no need to raise any other issues in this review except to inform the reader of the necessity of reading the literature in order to critically evaluate the thesis of graded absolutism.

Dr. Geisler has furnished for us an excellent service by providing another useful textbook for teaching Christian ethics. The book is worthy of careful consideration as a textbook in ethics for both graduate and undergraduate schools of Christian education.

JAMES M. GRIER

GRAND RAPIDS BAPTIST SEMINARY

*God and Politics: Four Views on the Reformation of Civil Government*, edited by Gary Scott Smith. Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1989. Pp. 300. \$13.95. Paper.

This text is the product of a Geneva College summer, 1987, "Consultation on the Biblical Role of Civil Government." The purpose of the conference was to clarify areas of agreement and divergence among Reformed Christians. Four major positions within the Reformed community were identified: theonomy, principled pluralism, Christian America, and national confessionalism. Leading representatives of each of these positions were invited to present papers at the conference and to respond to each other's arguments and critiques.

Theonomists, or "Christian Reconstructionists," agree that society and politics should be based on Old Testament law. They believe all Old Testament laws are applicable today unless specifically superseded in the New Testament. Their ultimate aim is the creation of a theocracy, and they believe this will come about as America is gradually founded on biblical norms in the postmillennial future.

Principled pluralists advance the concepts of "structural pluralism," meaning God has created certain sovereign institutions and no other institution can properly usurp the power of functions of the other—and "confessional pluralism," meaning that different communities of belief exist in the world because of sin, not because God wishes it. Principled pluralists believe the task of government is to promote righteousness and justice, and that the New Testament affirms that governments must tolerate and protect conflicting faith communities within boundaries of religious freedom. Many principled pluralists also believe Christians must treat the poor preferentially.

Christian America proponents contend that the United States began as a Christian nation, then lost its zeal, commitment, and Christian consensus. They argue that contemporary legislators should restore Christian morality

and the gospel to positions of societal influence. They believe that Scriptural norms should form the basis of a reinvigorated Christian America.

National confessionalism has existed since the mid-1800s. Those who adhere to the tenants of national confessionalism propose an amendment to the United States Constitution recognizing Christ's kingship. They also wish to acknowledge in the Preamble of the Constitution the authority of Jesus Christ.

All four Reformed communities agree that the Word of God is authoritative, Scripture speaks to all of life and Christ is the Lord of creation, God has ordained certain institutions like the family and government, Christians should resist secularization, persuasion not violence is the appropriate method for social and religious influence, and the United States is a *de facto* religiously pluralistic society. Reformed communities disagree on how Christ exercises His kingship over the nations, and they debate contemporary applications of Mosaic law. Reformed Christians disagree on biblical views of civil justice and the legitimate task and power of the state and the nature of confessional pluralism in a free society. They also disagree on whether Christ should be acknowledged in the nation's political documents and on whether the United States began as a Christian nation.

Gary Scott Smith of Grove City College provided excellent introductions to the book and to each section. He noted that the conference sponsors' goal was to help Christians work toward more understanding and agreement on political matters and to encourage Christians to develop biblically based views. The editor provided a helpful question and answer section at the end of the book, further developing understanding of positions by setting the debaters' statements in a conversational context.

This book is long overdue, for it helps readers distinguish subtle differences in Reformed Christian perspectives on religion and politics. It is recommended for every library and study.

REX M. ROGERS  
THE KING'S COLLEGE

*Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, by Dallas Willard. Harper and Row, 1988. Pp. 276. \$15.95. Cloth.

Initially I entered this book inquisitively, suspiciously and somewhat prejudicially (I soon discovered). As an all too typical evangelical Protestant, or simply one steeped in the modern Western philosophical tradition and its skewed anthropology, I saw the "disciplines" of the spiritual life as masochistic machinations of merit exercised by neo-Hindu Christians who had not yet learned the way of free grace in Jesus Christ. Asceticism is a way of self-salvation, isn't it? No. My previous perceptions have been thrown over and, through Dr. Dallas Willard's (professor of philosophy at USC) stimulating, enlightening, cogent and very biblical argument, I have begun to see that the disciplines as *biblically* exercised are neither means of merit nor masochism, but in fact the true way to the fullness of God's grace.



Willard, step by readable step, shows how the way of Christ is the way of the "easy yoke," the way of Christlikeness is the way Christ literally, realistically, daily "learned obedience"—in solitude, in fasting, in prayer, etc. Since the servant is not above his master and since both Christ and all of the disciples and the entire early church *assume* such to be part of the normal Christian life for growth in grace . . . why have we largely neglected these means?

Willard sheds the critical light of Scripture upon our present (popular) reckonings of the nature of our lostness, what it means to be "saved," our understanding of the nature of man as such. Further he shows our *usual* views to be not only unbiblical but too much in keeping within prevailing Western philosophical formulations. Over and over I found this book answering my continually arising points of criticism (but what about . . . ?) with clear answers. What seemed early to be problems were soon cleared up with further explanation of position. More importantly Willard sets forth the biblical view and arguments from Scripture that we all remember reading but do not take seriously. Of special significance is chapter seven, "St. Paul's Psychology of Redemption."

Beyond an effective rationale Willard wisely takes time to survey the history and development and, all too often, the degeneration of the disciplines into merit and self-glory. Further, he gives ample space to describe the point, nature and place of the classical disciplines in the Christian life. Again, and importantly, Willard clarifies how the disciplines relate to grace, to salvation, to the work of the Spirit in Christian lives, the role of the body in salvation, salvation as a *life* more than some existential moment of decision. As Willard states a central relationship;

. . . the physical human frame as created was designed for interaction with the spiritual realm and that this interaction can be resumed at the initiative of God. Then, through the disciplines for the spiritual life, that interaction can be developed by joint efforts of both God and the person (already) alive in the dynamism of the Spirit.

but further, this "exercise unto godliness" is again not the meriting of salvation but its outworking arising from our now regenerate responsibility whereby *we strive by God's grace* to lay hold of all we were meant to be.

This book has opened my eyes and changed my mind. Thank you Dr. Willard.

JOHN D. MORRISON  
LIBERTY UNIVERSITY



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# Books Reviewed

## BIBLE AND HERMENEUTICS

- BRUCE, F. F., *The Canon of Scripture* (James Edward McGoldrick) . . . . . 241

## OLD TESTAMENT

- DILLARD, RAYMOND B., *2 Chronicles* (David Barker) . . . . . 241  
DUMBRELL, WILLIAM J., *The Faith of Israel: Its Expression in the Books of the Old Testament* (Michael Grisanti) . . . . . 243

## NEW TESTAMENT

- FERGUSON, EVERETT, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (D. Brent Sandy) . . . . 244  
SILVA, MOISES, *Philippians* (Joel Williams) . . . . . 246  
VAUGHAN, CURTIS and THOMAS D. LEA, *1, 2, Peter, Jude* (A. Boyd Luter, Jr.) . . . 248

## THEOLOGY AND APOLOGETICS

- DE GRUCHY, JOHN ed., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Witness to Jesus Christ* (James Edward McGoldrick) . . . . . 249  
FOX, MATTHEW, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (Richard A. Young) . . . . 250  
GEISLER, NORMAN L. and WILLIAM D. WATKINS, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views*, second ed., (James M. Grier) . . . . . 252  
NASH, RONALD H., *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (John D. Morrison) . . . . . 253  
WHITCOMB, JOHN C., *The World That Perished*, revised ed., (Don B. DeYoung) . . . 254  
WRIGHT, RICHARD T., *Biology Through the Eyes of Faith* (Don B. DeYoung) . . . 254

## CHURCH HISTORY

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WILLARD, DALLAS, *Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (John D. Morrison) . . . . . 259









